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INSIDE



Energy Fair

To educate the community on the importance of conserving energy, the Residential Energy Assistance Challenge, under the Department of Community and Cultural Affairs, will host a REACH Energy Fair tomorrow, Nov. 20, at the Gilbert C. Ada Gymnasium in Susupe.

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PIC Promotions

Pacific Islands Club—one of the CNMI's leading hotels—has prepared special dining promotions for this month as the public celebrates Thanksgiving Day and other special events in the countdown to the December holidays.

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Govt subsidy eyed for CUC fuel

Plus gradual implementation of surcharge fee

By LIBERTY DONES
REPORTER

Acting Gov. Diego T. Benavente favors a gradual implementation of the fuel surcharge fee, coupled with government subsidy, to ensure a stable supply of power in the Commonwealth.

Benavente, who met with Commonwealth Utilities Corp. officials yesterday morning, said his proposal "is to break it [surcharge fee] down so the impact is not very burdensome."

He said this means "having different rates, gradual implementation, and with [government] subsidy."

"The thing is if the increase is less than 3.5 cents, we'd expect more power problems," he said in an interview yesterday.

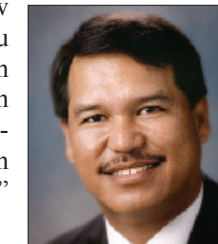
Benavente, as quoted by CUC officials during a separate meeting with Vice Speaker Timothy Villagomez yesterday, proposes a 1 cent subsidy from the government—to be appropriated by the Legislature—and the implementation of a 2.5 cents fuel surcharge fee for residential and commercial users.

While Benavente is pushing for a legislated subsidy, Villagomez is advising CUC to run to the executive branch to get emergency funds to avoid implementing the FSF by next month.

"The governor has reprogramming authority. What would prevent CUC from [implementing the fuel surcharge] is for them to get new cash. Where do you ask for it other than the government in the form of subsidy? I favor this than burden the people," he said.

He said Benavente's proposed legislated subsidy would "take a considerable time."

"Time is of essence here. One of the most pressing matters right now is that CUC needs cash inflow. I think the government can help and can prevent this



Benavente

See GOVT on Page 12



AGNES DONATO

Commonwealth Utilities Corp. board members, from right, Joseph Torres, Rufina Miles, and Allen Perez listen as the board discussed the proposed fuel surcharge fee, among other issues, in a meeting Thursday.

CUC insists: Show me the money

By AGNES E. DONATO
REPORTER

The government's proposal to provide legislated subsidy for Saipan households, in order to spare them from the fuel surcharge, drew mixed reactions yesterday from Commonwealth Utilities Corp.

CUC chair Francisco Q. Guerrero said the board will make a decision

next week on the planned implementation of the fuel surcharge, depending on how the appropriation measure for CUC's fuel costs would be received in the Legislature.

On the other hand, CUC comptroller Sohale Samari expressed doubt that the government could produce the amount needed to subsidize residential customers.

The CUC board of directors met yes-

terday, but failed to discuss all the items on the agenda, including the proposed fuel surcharge. The board members agreed to re-convene at 10am Wednesday to continue the meeting.

However, Guerrero reported to the board about the meeting he and some management officials had with acting Gov. Diego T. Benavente and Vice Speaker Timothy Villagomez

See CUC on Page 12

Muna leery of potential costs for BoS in lawsuit

By JOHN RAVELO
REPORTER

Bank of Saipan receiver Antonio Muna is reluctant to pursue the civil action against former receiver Randall Fennell and the latter's attorneys, citing potential costs that the bank might incur in the lawsuit.

This prompted the receivership court to send Muna and the bank's board of directors to the negotiating table to discuss pursuing the lawsuit against Fennell and

the bank's exposure to the cost of a suit.

The bank's board, through the law firm of David Mair, filed a civil complaint against Fennell and his attorneys in late September, accusing the defendants of breaching their fiduciary duties to the bank. The complaint, which seeks monetary damages against Fennell and the defendant attorneys, has yet to be served on Fennell.

Fennell's co-defendants in the lawsuit include lawyers Richard Pierce and David Axelrod, and the law firms White

Pierce Mailman & Nutting and Schwabe Williamson & Wyatt.

Associate judge Juan T. Lizama said that, while Mair's law firm has agreed to take the case on contingency and to cap the costs at \$50,000, subject to increase by vote of the bank's board, there are other potential costs that puts the bank-in-rehabilitation at risk of exposure.

Lizama said it is foreseeable that a lawsuit against a past receiver will lead to counterclaims against the present re-

See MUNA on Page 12

'Approve MRC settlement now'

By LIBERTY DONES
REPORTER

Acting Gov. Diego T. Benavente asked the Legislature yesterday to appropriate funds and approve the \$3-million Outer Cove Marina settlement agreement with Marine Revitalization Corp. no later than Nov. 29

See APPROVE on Page 12

Federal funding a factor in agencies' FY05 budget

By **LIBERTY DONES**
REPORTER

The Legislature will take into consideration the federal funding being received by government agencies in deciding how

much to set aside for offices under the proposed appropriation for FY 2005.

For instance, the House conference committee is aware that the Public School System receives some \$24 million a year in federal funding on top of its annual appropriation from the local government.

Under the continuing resolution, PSS gets \$37.2 million every year from the local coffers.

The House approved a little less than the current level, while the Senate maintained the present funding. The executive branch had asked for \$42 million for PSS.

"There are other agencies that get federal funds and the committee is looking into that in connection with their budget requests," said House leadership spokesman Charles Reyes Jr.

In particular, he said the House panel is interested to know how much does the Marianas Micronesian Legal Ser-

vices Corp. receive from the federal government.

MLRC recently appealed to the House to restore the \$100,000 budget cut made by the executive branch on its budget; it also asked that its total local appropriation be raised to \$200,000.

"They didn't mention how much actually they get in federal funds," he said.

MLSC directing attorney Jane Mack, in a recent letter to House Speaker Benigno R. Fitial, said that the Office of Management and Budget initially listed \$186,184 as budget for MLSC, an independent government program, but the governor eventually cut it by \$100,000.

Mack justified the need for budget restoration, noting that MLSC provides services to the poorest in the community.

"Please consider the needs of the poorest in the community, who depend on us as their only

avenue for access to justice and the judicial system," she said.

MLSC, founded over 30 years ago, provides free legal services to indigent individuals in civil cases.

"While the Public Defender only represents indigents accused of crimes, we handle civil cases," she said.

MLSC consists of three attorneys, two paralegals, and two secretaries. In a typical year, MLSC handles 300 to 400 cases, averaging one every day.

Reyes said that representatives from the Office of the Public Defender have also visited certain lawmakers to lobby for more funding. The House-approved appropriation bill identifies \$807,098 for the Public Defender, composed of 13 staff. The Public Defender's Office operates under the Office of the Governor.

The Senate approved \$827,090 for that office, listing 14 employees.

DIABETES
+GREEN

CUC ends contract with private water lab

By **AGNES E. DONATO**
REPORTER

The Commonwealth Utilities Corp. has ended its contract with a private laboratory that conducted CUC's water testing after the utility firm lost its certification last year.

CUC terminated its contract with Tanapag-based Quality Waters Inc. after receiving its re-certification from the Division of Environmental Quality earlier this month.

CUC executive director Lorraine Babauta said the utility firm now has full certification, which will remain valid for three years. After that period, CUC will undergo evaluation by the environmental agency.

"We are no longer using the services of Tanapag Waters. We are now fully running our own tests [of drinking water samples]," she said.

DEQ revoked the water laboratory's permit on Sept. 19, 2003 due to allegedly falsified

bacteria data report, invalid sampling, false reporting, and lack of qualified personnel to oversee the laboratory.

On numerous occasions, water samples were not tested for bacteria but CUC reported them to DEQ as negative, according to the environmental agency.

CUC had also committed violations by reading out samples before the actual 18 to 24 hours required incubation period was up. In some instance, CUC failed to keep a record of incubation time or read out time.

Further, CUC had reported certain samples as negative when they were actually positive for either total coliform or E.Coli. Based on the DEQ manual, all positive total coliform samples should be reported to the DEQ Safe Drinking Water branch.

In addition, DEQ noted that CUC lacked qualified staff to handle the water sampling, after it placed laboratory manager Pete Babauta and assistant manager Mariano Iglesias on indefinite administrative leave on Sept. 1, 2003.

Babauta, who is the husband of the CUC executive director, subsequently retired from government service. He is currently facing charges of conspiracy to defraud the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and false documents in the U.S. District Court.

US FASHION
+GREEN

Island Snapshots

The Saipan Tribune accepts unsolicited photos of holidays, weddings, baptisms, and other community and family events for free publication. Material submitted should be original and not copyrighted, in digital or print format. Most include a caption containing complete details for description of the event, location of the persons in the picture, the date, and the place, the name of the contributor, and a contact number. The Saipan Tribune reserves the right to edit the caption, the date of publication and the date of the picture. Contributors are e-mail their submissions to editor@saipantribune.com. To check if contributions are received, call 223-6207, 223-3446, or 223-4743.

Case against combative passenger to proceed

By JOHN RAVELO
REPORTER

The U.S. District Court has junked the request of a Chinese tourist to dismiss the criminal charge filed against him for allegedly assaulting crew members aboard an aircraft that was headed to Saipan last Sept. 11, 2004.

Liu Shijun, who faces a charge of interference with flight crew members and attendants in Saipan’s federal court, claimed that the statute that became the basis for his case is unconstitutionally vague, saying that the law fails to give a person of ordinary intelligence notice that his act is forbidden by it.

Liu claimed he did not know that the United States has special jurisdiction over aircraft flying into the nation or its territories. The alleged assault happened during a China Eastern Airlines flight from Shanghai, China to Saipan.

Chief judge Alex R. Munson said the defendant did not argue for the alleged vagueness of the statute as to the assault, but that he was unaware that the aircraft

he was on was headed to the United States and was subject to the nation’s criminal law jurisdiction.

“The ‘contemplated conduct of the forbidden statute’ is not being [on] an airplane within the special aircraft jurisdiction of the United States; rather, the forbidden conduct is assaulting a crew member or flight attendant with the result that the person’s ability to conduct his or her duties is prevented or lessened,” the judge said.

The judge also denied the request of the defendant for a list of the flight attendants’ duties with which he allegedly interfered when he allegedly assaulted them.

“[The U.S. government] need not identify and prove any specific duty an attendant was prevented or hindered from performing; rather, plaintiff need prove only that a flight attendant’s ability to perform his or her normal duties was prevented or lessened because of the alleged assault by the defendant,” Munson said.

The court earlier set Liu’s trial to begin on Nov. 22.

Assistant U.S. Attorney Ja-

mie Bowers formally charged Liu in federal court, accusing Liu that he “unlawfully and knowingly assaulted and intimidated flight crew members and attendants...and interfered with the performance of [their] duties, and lessened their abilities to perform [them].”

The federal prosecutor said the charge lodged against Liu carries a maximum prison term of 20 years.

Earlier reports said the tourist fought with two flight attendants during the flight. Liu reportedly got up from his seat and walked toward the front portion of the aircraft, prompting the flight attendants to ask him where he was going.

Liu allegedly said that he would use the restroom. He became combative when the flight

attendants told him to use the lavatories at the aircraft’s rear portion. The attendants attempted to escort him back to his seat but the passenger struggled with them.

According to the FBI, one of the flight attendants sustained a broken nose, while another had bruises and a black eye. Commonwealth Ports Authority police personnel took custody of Liu upon the flight’s arrival at the Saipan Interna-

PHI

CB CRUZ

CARS UNLIMITED

MCDO

CAMACHO

WOMENS CLINIC

Unprepared prosecution upends theft case

A Superior Court judge dismissed a theft case due to the failure of prosecution lawyers to prepare for a scheduled trial on Tinian.

Associate Judge David Wiseman ordered that the theft of service charge against Li Guang Hui be dismissed with finality and the return of any bail posted by the defendant.

“The defendant was ready for his trial, which would have occurred, but for the government’s not being prepared to go forward,” Wiseman said. “A defendant charged with a criminal case should not have to be in an indefinite period of uncertainty as to whether or not he or she will be recharged some day.”

In a recent ruling, Wiseman granted the prosecution’s request to dismiss the case. Instead of dismissing the case without prejudice to its possible re-filing, the judge ruled that he has the discretion to decide whether dismissal should be without prejudice or final.

During a scheduled trial on Oct. 8, Wiseman said the attorney for the government, Grant D. Sanders, told the court that the prosecution was not ready for the trial because it did not have its witnesses during that time.

“The defendant was ready and, at the public’s expense, had two interpreters travel from Saipan,” the judge said. *(John Ravelo)*

COMMUNITY Briefs

ChaCha Oceanview Open House Night today

ChaCha Jr. High School will be having an Open House Night today, Nov. 19, from 4pm to 6pm. Mid-quarter Progress Reports are also to be picked up at each of the classes your child(ren) is/are taking. Ask your child(ren) the names of all his or her teachers to save you time and alleviate any confusion.

Should you have any questions, feel free to call the school at 664-4100/4103/4105 and/or 4106.

Senate session cancelled

Senate President Joaquin G. Adriano said that the previously scheduled session for today, Nov. 19, has been cancelled as the Rota Legislative Delegation members have other important groundbreaking ceremonies on the same day on Rota.

The next session will be on Tuesday, Nov. 23, 2004, 9am at the Rota NMC Conference Room.

Free conference on domestic violence

The Domestic Violence Conference Steering Committee will be hosting a Domestic Violence Conference on Dec. 2 and 3, 2004 (Thursday and Friday) at the Hyatt Regency SandCastle. Admission is free.

Some of the topics are Dynamics of Domestic Violence, Temporary Restraining Order Process, the new Domestic Violence Law, and the Criminal Justice System's Response to Domestic Violence.

Seating is limited so call as soon as possible to register.

For more information contact Patrick Diaz at 236-9783, Ursula Aldan at 236-9868, or Esther Milne at 323-1954.

CCLPC Commissioners meeting notice

The Chamorro/Carolinian Language Policy Commission will conduct its regular meeting on Friday, Dec. 3, 2004, at 1pm, at the Office on Aging Conference Room. The public is invited to attend this meeting.

For more information, contact the Language Commission Office at 288-5321/26/27.

Wanted: designated drivers

The Department of Public Safety Traffic Section will again implement its Designated Driver program this December to promote road safety during the holiday season.

The program provides transportation for intoxicated individuals. Instead of driving while intoxicated, individuals may contact the Traffic Section and a driver will be provided for transportation home.

Those interested in taking

part in the program are encouraged to contact Rose Ada-Hocog or Sgt. Sylvan Rangamar at 664-9084/5/6.

Students to send letters to NMI soldiers

Public and private school students in the Commonwealth are writing holiday letters to CNMI military personnel who won't be home in the CNMI for the holidays.

The letters are part of Project Holiday Cheer, which is being sponsored by the Office of the Governor, the Public School System, the Office of Military and Veterans Affairs, VFW Post 3457, the Pacific STAR Center for Young Writers, and the Pacific STAR Young Writers Foundation.

Packets will include letters and a t-shirt designed by one of the student illustrators.

"If you have a family member or know someone in the military who won't be home for the holidays, please provide us with an address so a packet can be mailed from the CNMI community," project organizers said in a statement.

Individuals can page Kathryn Tuten-Puckett at 236-READ and she will return the call to get the address.

Deadline set for EAP scholarship

The Educational Assistance Program Winter/Spring 2005 deadline is Dec. 15, 2004.

EAP is for those who have completed their high school requirement and desires to pursue a postsecondary education (certificate to bachelor's degree).

EAP provides funding to assist defray educational cost for eligible individuals for the following program:

- on-island/offisland enrolled at an accredited institution as a fulltime status;
- on-island fulltime employee who desires to pursue a postsecondary education on a part-time status;
- on-island students taking courses online which are not offered at Northern Marianas College.

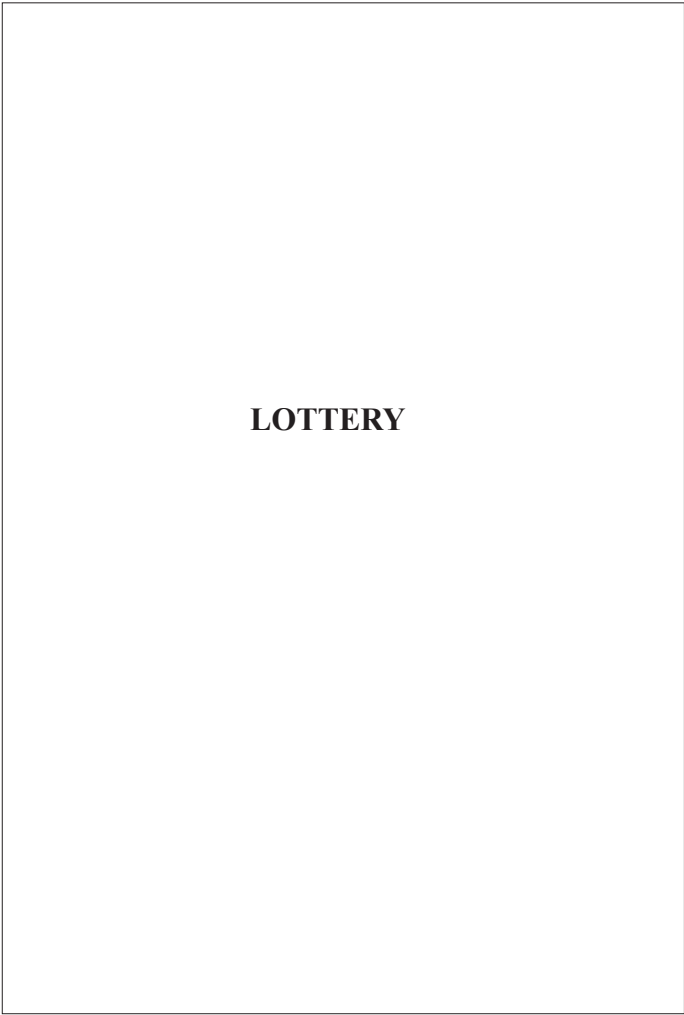
Upon availability of funds, EAP offers financial assistance for the following programs: Graduate, Juris Doctor or Doctor of Medicine.

Application must be received or postmarked no later than Dec. 15, 2004. If you have submitted an application for Fall 2004, the application is still valid. Supporting documents (may be submitted at a later date) are U.S. passport and/or birth certificate issued by the court, an acceptance letter into the school you plan to attend, the most recent official sealed transcript and proof of 2002 & 2003 CNMI residency.

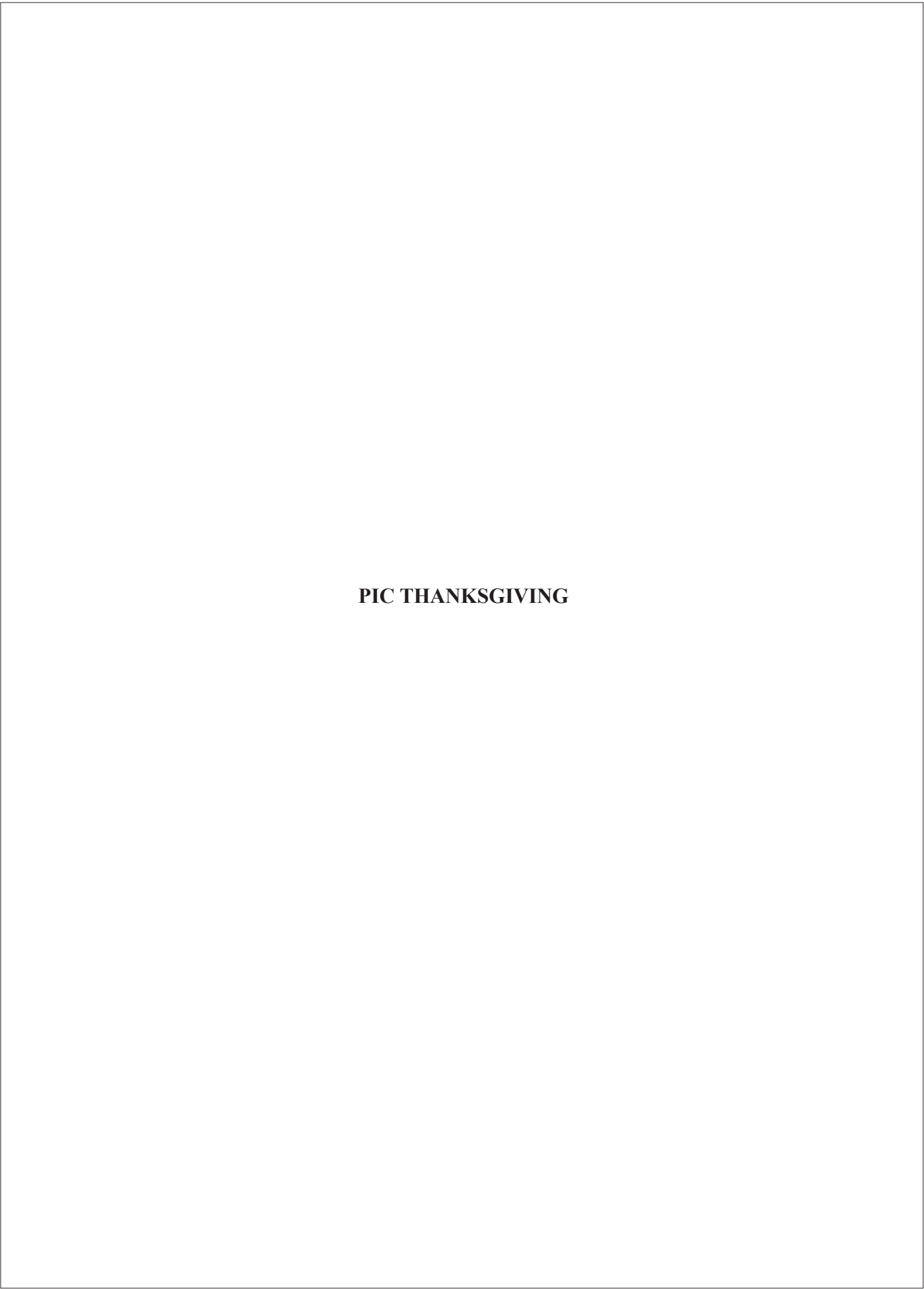
Additionally, other scholarship application for the 2004/2005 is now available. Log on to www.cnmischolarship.com for more details.

FLIGHT SCHEDULE AS OF NOVEMBER 19, 2004											
DEPARTURES						ARRIVALS					
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FOREIGN AIR FLIGHT SCHEDULE											
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LOTTERY



PIC THANKSGIVING

Don't Be A Turkey Walk set Saturday

By SHAN SEMAN
REPORTER

Various agencies have set a walk event scheduled to take place tomorrow from 6am to 10am to promote healthy lifestyles and address the increasing number of individuals with diabetes in the Commonwealth.

Dubbed the 4th Annual Don't Be A Turkey Walk for Diabetes Prevention, the event provides a venue for residents to begin or continue practicing healthy lifestyles in hopes of preventing and lowering the number of diabetics on the islands.

According to the Commonwealth Diabetes Coalition, about 30,000 individuals are registered as diabetics; however, the number does not include individuals seeking medical assistance from private clinics.

The coalition said that roughly around \$28 million is spent on treatment for complications relating to diabetes.

"We're trying to prevent diabetes, and this event that we're doing, we're trying to get people to exercise...and the other part

Free diabetes seminar for caregivers, families

Does someone in your family have diabetes? What about a close friend or work colleague? Do you ever try to help them with their diabetes or give them support? Do you wish that you understood diabetes so you could help even more?

If you answered yes, then the Diabetes Prevention and Control Program has something for you. The program will be holding a FREE one-hour seminar for caregivers of people with diabetes. The session will be held at the Aquarius Hotel Conference Room today, Friday, Nov. 19. It will be held at 1-2pm and again at 6-7pm. (This will be a repeat of the first session).

There will be a Chamorro interpreter teaching the seminar. The program stressed that the seminar is not for nurses or doctors, but for community caregivers and family members.

Through this, participants can learn more about:

- What diabetes means in our body
- What level blood sugar should be at
- The importance of medicines
- How to control diabetes and problems it can cause
- Things that people with diabetes have to do regularly

The purpose of this seminar is to share information about diabetes care and to give information about diabetes to those members of the community affected by it.

November is National Diabetes Awareness Month, and the key theme that DPCP has chosen to address throughout

the month is personal responsibility. This means that the person who has diabetes must take control of his or her own health. But it also means that every member of this person's community and family is responsible for supporting them and for preventing diabetes in other people.

"We believe it is critical that everybody gets involved as a community in this fight against diabetes. Individuals need to know why medical professionals are making decisions affecting them rather than blindly oblige, and family members need to provide a loving, supportive environment to encourage healthy changes. For this reason we are focusing on diabetes being everybody's business," a DPCP statement said.

Since this particular seminar is focused on the caregiver of the person with diabetes, the seminar will be discussing how one can support a diabetic person to make healthy changes and to ensure they are doing what they need to in their care.

Participants will receive a training manual, the Resource Manual for Caregivers of People with Diabetes, which will provide diabetes information and education, and suggests ways to support and assist in meeting the health and lifestyle needs of people with diabetes. They will also receive other resources that will help individuals take control of their diabetes.

"Come and join us to learn more. Seating is limited, please call 236-8715 or 236-8716 to register," DPCP said.

is eating healthy," said Konrad S. Reyes, executive director for the AYUDA Network Inc., which is part of the coalition.

Two distances—5K and 10K—are featured in the event, with the 5K turnaround marker set at the World War II tank across the Quartermaster intersection, and the 10K turnaround at the intersection by Microl Corp. in San Jose. Walkers and runners will begin their course at the Garapan Basketball Court and trek along the Beach Road Pathway.

A \$10 fee will be charged. Participants must register between 6-7am.

Several water and aid stations will also be provided between the starting point and the two turnarounds.

Organizers also disclosed that free T-shirts will be given to the first 200 registrants, as well as free blood and cholesterol screening conducted by the Department of Public Health.

Funds generated from the event will go toward community and public awareness programs conducted by the coalition.

Meanwhile, the Department of Public Safety is advising all motorists to give utmost courtesy to participants of the walk.

Last year, over 200 participants graced the event.

Aside from the AYUDA Network and DPH, other agencies involved in the event include the Saipan Mayor's Office, Saipan Walking Association Inc., and

HARD ROCK

CARRIER

ISLA FINANCIAL
+GREEN

ACE

HAMILTON

BANK OF HAWAII

HARDT EYE

NMC ceramic studio receives new kiln

The Northern Marianas College is the recipient of a slightly used propane gas kiln along with a potter’s wheel, a ballmill, and various glazes that were donated by artist and former resident of Tinian, Daniel Bennet.

All the equipment were originally brought to Tinian by Bennet and his family. However, they later became available when the artist returned to the mainland.

Barry Wonenberg, the ceramics instructor at NMC, was informed by Bennet about the availability of the ceramic equipment and was asked if the ceramics class at NMC would be interested in obtaining the equipment for course purposes. The only condition was that they would cover the expense of transporting the equipment from Tinian to Saipan.

Wonenberg was ecstatic about the opportunity and began the necessary procedures of transporting the equipment immediately. “This has been in the works since February of this year so it took several months for this to happen,” said Wonenberg. “Kay Christian, a student at NMC, was instrumental in coordinating with the various agencies so that everything came together so nicely.”

Wonenberg said that the kiln enhances the ceramic studio’s capabilities by giving students the opportunity to expand their knowledge and creativity by increasing the variations possible during the firing process.

“It is a very significant piece of equipment for any college ceramics studio. We’re very appreciative of this generous contribution and want to acknowledge others who assisted in making this possible,” he said.

The donors include Trenton Connor and the staff of Tinian Stevedore who were instrumental in the preparation and shipping of the kiln from Tinian to Saipan.

Verizon Micronesia generously donated \$500 to help pay for the shipping expense, while Mark Blackburn and the crew of Seafix Inc. provided their boom truck and manpower to transport the kiln from the seaport to its new home in the ceramics studio.

Verizon marketing manager Russ Quinn said that the company believes in investing in the future of the CNMI, especially when it comes to education. “We are glad that Mr. Wonenberg asked us here at Verizon to be a part of this and we hope that the students will make good use of this equipment,” said Quinn.

“The kiln is an impressive piece of equipment and it is amazing to see the types of products that can be made by using it. The machine will truly take NMC’s ceramics class to another level and hopefully, we’ll be seeing more ceramic artwork from our CNMI residents being displayed at community events and exhibits,” said Carlene Reyes-Tenorio, marketing coordinator/public relations/communications of Verizon.

The kiln or oven is six feet tall and weighs about 1,500 lbs. It has the ability to fire the students’ work to 2,400 degrees F (approximately 1,300 C) and is available at NMC ceramics classes. For more information or if you are interested in taking ceramic courses, call 234-5498.

DRINKING WATER WARNING

CUC Saipan Water is Contaminated with [*E. Coli*]

BOIL YOUR WATER BEFORE USING

E. Coli bacteria was found in the water supply on October 18, 19, 26, 28, 29 and November 1, 9, 10, 11 and 12. These bacteria can make you sick, and are a particular concern for people with weakened immune systems.

What should I do?

- ❑ **DO NOT DRINK THE WATER WITHOUT BOILING IT FIRST.** Bring all water to a boil, let it boil for one minute, and let it cool before using, or use bottled water. Boiled or bottled water should be used for drinking, making ice, brushing teeth, washing dishes, and food preparation **until further notice**. Boiling kills bacteria and other organisms in the water.
- ❑ *Fecal coliforms and E. Coli are bacteria whose presence indicates that the water may be contaminated with human or animal wastes. Microbes in these wastes can cause diarrhea, cramps, nausea, headaches, or other symptoms. They may pose a special health risk for infants, young children, some of the elderly, and people with severely compromised immune systems.*
- ❑ The symptoms above are not caused only by organisms in drinking water. If you experience any of these symptoms and they persist, you may want to seek medical advice. People at increased risk should seek advice about drinking water from their health care providers.

What happened? What is being done?

Bacterial contamination can occur when increased run-off enters the drinking water source (for example, following heavy rains). It can also happen due to a break in the distribution system (pipes) or a failure in the water treatment process.

The CUC Water Division is increasing the monitoring to determine where the contamination is coming from and they are closely monitoring the chlorination stations to ensure proper disinfection of the drinking water. We will inform you when tests show no bacteria and you no longer need to boil your water. We anticipate resolving the problem within a week.

For more information, please contact CUC’s Water Manager Jesus Castro or Management Specialist Pamela Mathis at 235-7025, or the CUC Lab at 322-5140, or you may write to them at P. O. Box 501220 CK, Saipan, MP 96950. Questions that relate to the CNMI Drinking Water Regulations may be addressed to Joe Kaipat of the Division of Environmental Quality. He may be reached at 664-8500.

Please share this information with all the other people who drink this water, especially those who may not have received this notice directly (for example, people in apartments, nursing homes, schools, and businesses). You can do this by posting this notice in a public place or distributing copies by hand or mail.

This notice is being sent to you by CUC. State Water System ID#: MP000001.

Date distributed: 11/18/04

Opinion

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Letters to the Editor

Azmar’s worst nightmare



BING CHAVEZ

CELEBRATE THE GOOD LIFE ON THANKSGIVING

The Kili Café and Terrace of the Hyatt Regency Hotel Saipan has been spruced up for a special Thanksgiving treat for its guests. On Nov. 25, Hyatt will hold its big Thanksgiving brunch buffet at Kili, extending the feast right up to Giovanni's Restaurant. Kili's manager Shekhar Das said the restaurant offers all the traditional Thanksgiving food items and all other items offered during Sunday brunch at Giovanni's. Thanksgiving brunch is offered at \$30 per guest.

MUNA

From Page 1

ceiver and the board of directors, which means the bank would be required to defend the receiver and the board. In addition, there is the possibility of damages should a counterclaim suit succeeds.

"This is a substantial risk to the bank's funds at a time when large depositors like the Commonwealth's Retirement Fund and MPLA [Marianas Public Lands Authority] still lack full access to their deposits," he added.

Lizama said the court is reluctant to allow bank funds to be spent to pursue the lawsuit against Fennell without an arrangement limiting Fennell's exposure.

He ordered Muna and the bank's board to meet within 45 days to discuss ways to limit the bank's potential exposure to the suit. Lizama said the court would intervene if Muna and the board fail to agree within the negotiation period.

"In conducting their negotiations, the board and the receiver should be aware

that the court will be reluctant to allow expenditures of bank funds exceeding \$200,000 total—including the costs of defending against counterclaims and paying damages on successful counterclaims," Lizama said.

On April 30, 2002, the court appointed Fennell as temporary receiver at the request of the CNMI government. On May 10 that year, Mair said Fennell exclusively submitted a pleading in court, which resulted in an order extending the receivership indefinitely.

Mair said Fennell reopened the bank during his receivership without any rehabilitation plan in place, allowing depositors to withdraw a large percentage of the bank's deposits and precipitating a bank run.

Fennell had also pushed for the liquidation of the bank's assets to pay off depositors.

"Fennell and the receivership attorneys were motivated by, and conducted the receivership consistent with, a hidden agenda to destroy rather than rehabilitate the bank, and to retaliate against certain bank directors and ma-

jor shareholders, to the detriment of the bank, its depositors and shareholders," Mair said in the lawsuit.

Mair said Fennell and his attorneys repeatedly and deliberately failed to disclose material information to the bank, including conflicts of interests and hostility to the bank and its shareholders. He also said Fennell actively prevented the bank from participating in discussions and proceedings related to the financial institution's continued existence.

Mair also noted Fennell's request for the receivership court to exonerate him from claims that might result from his acts or omissions as receiver, which the court granted. The BoS appealed the Superior Court's rulings granting Fennell full judicial immunity from possible lawsuits that may be filed against him.

Under Muna's receivership term, the bank shifted gears, this time toward rehabilitation. Under a court-approved rehabilitation plan, the bank reopened on May 27, 2003.

To date, the bank has significantly revived services, including loan services.

It announced earlier this month that the Garapan branch would soon reopen, more than a year after the reopening of the main branch in Chalan Kanoa.

Bank president Jon Bargfrede said that the bank's net profit reached about \$990,000 from January to October this year. He projected the bank's net profit by yearend to reach over a million dollars. He also disclosed projections that the bank would earn between \$450,000 to \$600,000 in net profit next year.

Bargfrede said bank deposits have totaled \$26 million, with some \$3.6 million coming in since the May 2003 reopening. He said the bank's cash and liquid investments have reached \$12.5 million. About \$3 million have been recovered from its delinquent loan portfolio.

Bargfrede said the bank has accepted about 1,000 new accounts since reopening. Since reviving loan services recently, the bank has loaned out approximately \$140,000. He also said that the plan to issue ATM cards is in the process, following approval by the Federal Reserve Bank.

APPROVE

From Page 1

to avoid arbitration and huge financial liabilities.

"Time is running out. Arbitration is set to resume Nov. 29, 2004. Once arbitration is underway, settlement is unlikely, the inducement to contain costs is gone... I ask that you exert your authority to resolve this matter in the interest of the Commonwealth, avoid significant future fiscal liability, and acquire a valuable asset for economic development," said Benavente in a letter he sent yesterday to Senate President Joaquin G. Adriano and House Speaker Benigno R. Fitial.

He said the settlement agreement, which was negotiated for over 12 months by the Attorney General's Office, calls for an initial payment of \$800,000 and an additional \$2.2 million payable in deferred monthly installments over 20 years.

The \$3-million figure, he said, was based in part on the Office of the Public Auditor's report that indicated that businessman Anthony Pellegrino spent \$3.6 million to build the marina.

In a contract dispute, he said, one legal approach is to put the parties back into their pre-contract positions.

"So if Mr. Pellegrino is paid the money that he spent to build the marina, he would be back where he started from. But that's not all. Additional damages for which the Commonwealth may be liable include arbitration costs, attorneys' fees, post-judgment interest and possibly lost profits. What these damages would total is uncertain. What is certain is that MRC would reinstate its claims in excess of \$5 million. Such increased liability can be avoided by implementing the settlement agreement now," Benavente said.

To illustrate the advantage of a settlement over a judgment, he said that, in a scenario where \$3 million is awarded

by arbitrators, this becomes a judgment and an annual interest of 9 percent starts accruing at a rate of \$270,000 a year. In addition, the CNMI would be liable for arbitrators' fee, attorneys' fees, and possibly pre-judgment interest.

"All of these costs are multiplied if the award is greater than \$3 million. Under the settlement, we pay \$800,000 now and \$2.2 million over 20 years," he said.

The amount, based on the agreement, can be paid through the operating revenues of the Outer Cove Marina.

If it generates no income or if the income is insufficient, the shortfall is counted as a dollar-for-dollar tax credit against the tax obligations of specified Pellegrino companies.

In addition to the cost factor, Benavente said that a settlement is greatly preferable because under a judgment, the Commonwealth does not gain possession of the marina until it is fully paid.

The settlement agreements allows

the government immediate access to the property—the only commercial marina in the CNMI.

The issue has been pending resolution since April 1999 when MRC/Pellegrino sued the CNMI government for various breaches involving the company's operation at the Outer Cove Marina. The lawsuit was dismissed for lack of jurisdiction and the parties began binding arbitration in April 2001. In January 2002, the independent arbitrator advised parties to enter into settlement negotiations.

"This only happens when it is clear to the arbitrator that liability exists for the defendant, in this case the CNMI. Settlement is urged because it would save time and money for all concerned," said Benavente.

He said the AGO, then headed by Robert Torres and later by Ramona Manglona, negotiated for over 12 months to arrive at the settlement agreement that was finally executed on Feb. 11, 2003.

GOVT

From Page 1

from happening," Villagomez said.

He said any government aid to CUC must take place before the Dec. 7 billing. "CUC needs to go back to the administration. Otherwise, there is no choice left for CUC but to do this or face bankruptcy," he said.

He said CUC needs \$5 million by the end of the year.

Meantime, Villagomez said he would introduce his proposed interim fuel surcharge fee bill when the House holds a session Wednesday next week. His proposal provides for a bigger government share of \$2.5 cents in the form of subsidy.

Villagomez, who also chairs the House Committee on Public Utilities, Transportation, and Communications, said an interim FSF would mean keeping the current rate for residential users, imposing 1 cent per kilowatt hour for commercial users, and 2.5 cents for government users.

The CUC currently charges residential users a flat rate of 11 cents per kwh and 16 cents for commercial and government consumers.

CUC aims to impose at least 3.5 cents per kwh across the board beginning early next month in view of fuel price increases worldwide. CUC said it pays nearly \$5million a month for fuel each month and is complaining that it is fast running out of funds, unless it implements the fuel surcharge fee.

CUC

From Page 1

yesterday morning.

In an interview, Guerrero said CUC is now faced with different options on how to approach the fuel surcharge. These choices include sparing households from the adjustment, lowering the amount for residential, government and/or commercial customers, or implementing an across-the-board fuel surcharge of 3.5 cents per kwh in December.

"If the Legislature could come up with additional funds to subsidize the residents who will be affected by the 3.5 cents, it will be good. We will be decide what to do maybe next week. We will consider the government's plea, provided that the appropriation comes out," Guerrero said.

He maintained that a tax credit for customers using less than 2,001 kwh per month is another option that the Legislature should consider. He noted that it would reward people who conserve energy, and by doing so, help CUC reduce its fuel costs for power generation.

Samari also made some comments on the government's proposal in his report to the CUC board.

He said that neither Benavente nor Villagomez could say where they plan to get the money to provide the subsidy, in case CUC agrees with their suggestion to not impose any fuel surcharge in the residential category and to lower the amount for government and commercial customers.

Samari noted that based on the various scenarios discussed during the meeting, the amount of subsidy would range between \$227,000 and \$1 million.

"So basically, people are trying to put us through the all motions, and we ask them to show us the money... they [turn out to be] empty-handed," he said.

He reiterated that CUC will face a huge shortfall—the amount of which he declined to make public—by January if the fuel surcharge does not push through. "[The fuel surcharge] is our only option right now," he said.

BoS case prosecutor gets national award

Patrick J. Smith from the U.S. Attorney’s Office on Saipan has been chosen as one of the recipients of this year’s Director’s Awards for Superior Performance as an Assistant U.S. Attorney.

According to U.S. Attorney Leonardo M. Rapadas, Smith was presented the award yesterday at the 21st annual Executive Office for the United States Attorneys Director’s Awards Ceremony held in Washington, D.C. The event was hosted by the U.S. Department of Justice.

Rapadas said that Smith received his award “for his outstanding work in the complex prosecution of individuals who defrauded the Bank of Saipan of over \$7 million.”

Smith was among 224 award recipients who received recognition for their excellence in law enforcement. Recipients included Assistant U.S. Attorneys, litigation and information technology support personnel, as well as others who have made outstanding contributions in federal, state, and local enforcement.

“I commend all of the award recipients for their extraordinary accomplishments,” said Attorney General John Ashcroft. “You have made a difference that has expended the freedom of the American people—giving them freedom from terrorism, freedom from crime, freedom from the dependency of drugs, and freedom from dishonesty and deception in our financial markets. Your work, your lives, and your actions have changed lives for the better, ensuring that

every American is equal under the law and protected by the United States Constitution.”

“These awards recognize the impressive achievements of 224 of the nation’s finest public servants,” said Mary Beth Buchanan, director of the Executive Office for the U.S. Attorneys at the Department of Justice. “They are the prosecutors, secretaries, paralegals, IT specialists, officers, agents, and others whose hard work makes our nation safer and our system of justice stronger.”

Working together, the nation’s law enforcement and justice community have:

- Driven the violent crime rate to its lowest level in 30 years;
- Increased gun-crime prosecutions by 68 percent in just three years—and as a consequence,

over the past three years the number of gun crimes has decreased by more than \$250,000;

- Charged more than 900 violators in more than 400 cases since the inception of the Corporate Fraud Task Force. To date, more than 500 individuals have been convicted, including the prosecution of top executives whom have been shown do not stand above the law;
- Dismantled 14 major drug-trafficking networks and seriously disrupted eight more over the past two years alone;

Stopped human trafficking. In the fiscal years of 2001 to 2003, 210 new human-trafficking investigations were opened. That is double the number of the previous three years;

- Charged 439 individuals for criminal civil rights violations over the past three fiscal years. This is more than were charged during the preceding three years; and
- Obtained the single largest civil penalty in history against a single company for violations of an environmental statute.

Through tough enforcement of the Clean Air Act, a reduction in air pollution of over \$465,000 tons per year has been achieved. And courts imposed more than \$179 million in civil penalties for violations in environmental cases, second only to fiscal year 2003’s record-setting recovery or \$203 million.

The Executive Office for the U.S. Attorneys provides oversight, general executive assistance and direction to the 94 U.S. Attorney’s Offices around the country.

Remengesau to throw party for Palauans in NMI

Republic of Palau President Tommy E. Remengesau Jr., along with Vice-President Elect Comsek E. Ching, is inviting all the Palauans here in the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands to an “Appreciation Party” on Friday.

The Appreciation Committee said the party is intended for each and everyone for giving the two officials a vote of confidence and trust to lead the republic for the next four years.

The party will be held Friday, Nov. 19, 2004, at the Garapan Round House in Garapan, from 5pm to 11pm.

For more information, call 234-0885.

CUC explains power outage

The Commonwealth Utilities Corp.’s Power Division said that yesterday’s power outage in some parts of Kiya, which lasted from 2pm to 5pm, was intended to replace a power pole struck by a vehicle and another that has deteriorated. This outage was necessary to allow the CUC linemen to work on de-energized power lines safely, the agency said in a statement.

FHB

On Guam, it’s still ‘don’t drink the water’

HAGATNA, Guam (PDN, PIR)—When Brett Burnham moved to Guam almost a year ago, he was told by friends not to drink the tap water.

“Don’t drink the water” is a phrase that many people hear when traveling to some foreign or undeveloped countries, but many Guam residents also regard their tap water with distrust.

Many island residents have made a habit of buying commercially purified water, rather than getting drinking water from their faucets.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has expressed recent concerns regarding the pace of Guam Waterworks Authority’s efforts toward improving the island’s water quality. Several deadlines have been set by a federal court order, and if not met, could mean a \$1,000 fine for each violation each day for the water agency.

In a letter dated Nov. 2, the federal EPA acknowledged the changes that have been made by the water utility in the past year, and also raised concerns that certain problems should have been solved already.

Residents have endured boil-water notices throughout the years because of the presence of fecal coliform in the system, and last month, traces of chlordane, a now-banned chemical once used against termites, were found in a Harmon well.

One of the federal EPA’s

concerns is the water agency’s failure to set up a program to monitor the chlorine levels and other disinfection techniques for the water system.

Burnham, who moved to the island from Maine, said although he is one of the fortunate residents in Santa Rita to have consistent water pressure, he doesn’t trust the system enough to actually drink water from the faucet.

Burnham said Guam’s water treatment system could definitely be improved, and added that the problems that the water agency is facing are “ridiculous.”

“The infrastructure is just so badly damaged,” Burnham said.

Burnham also said there is no concerted effort to resolve any of the current problems.

“There are too many problems, and there doesn’t seem to be any will to get things done,” Burnham said.

As deadlines and fines loom ahead, other residents questioned a recent water rate increase.

Jermaine Alerta, a 22-year-old resident of Agat, said while he is comfortable enough with his tap water to drink it, he is more concerned with the agency’s recent rate increase.

Last month, the Public Utilities Commission approved an overall 6.5 percent increase to Guam Waterworks Authority water rates.

The typical household is expected to see a 3 to 5 percent increase.

A household that consumes

about 8,400 gallons of water a month could see an increase of \$1.67 in its bill.

Government agencies and businesses will see the heftiest increase, about 10 percent. A small business using about 9,600 gallons each month will see an increase of \$6.12 to its bill.

The rate hike will help provide the agency with money to improve the water system, officials have said.

“I can understand why rates need to be increased, but if they’re going to raise the rates, they need to start drastically improving the services,” Alerta said.

Alerta said the idea of rate increases and the unreliable service for many is what upsets the public the most.

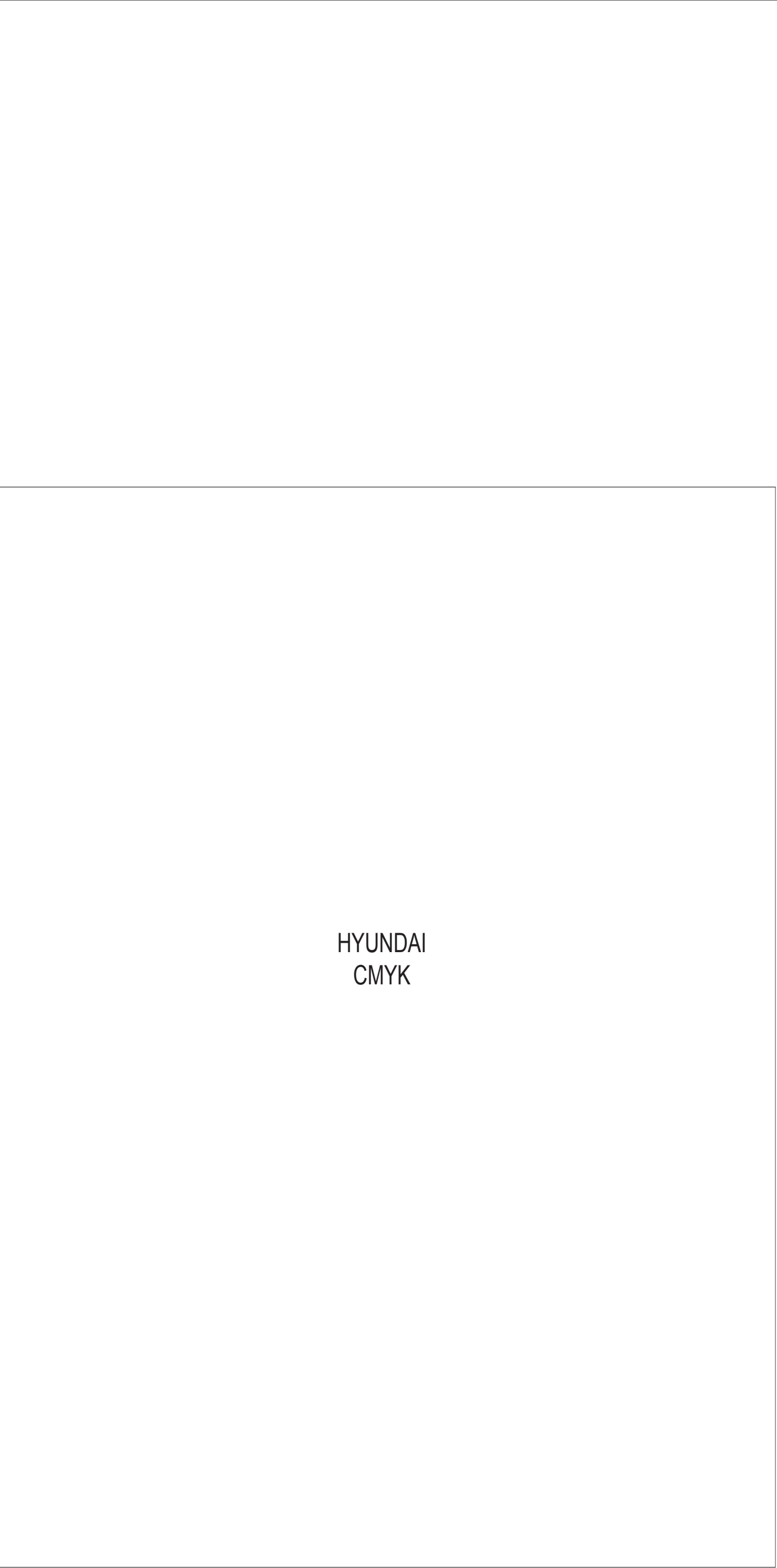
Others, such as Anthony Alcantara, 37, of Chalan Pago said the water agency has improved its service to the island as far as supplying the water to residents.

“There’s no problem with island service, and usually when a pipe breaks, they come and fix it,” he said.

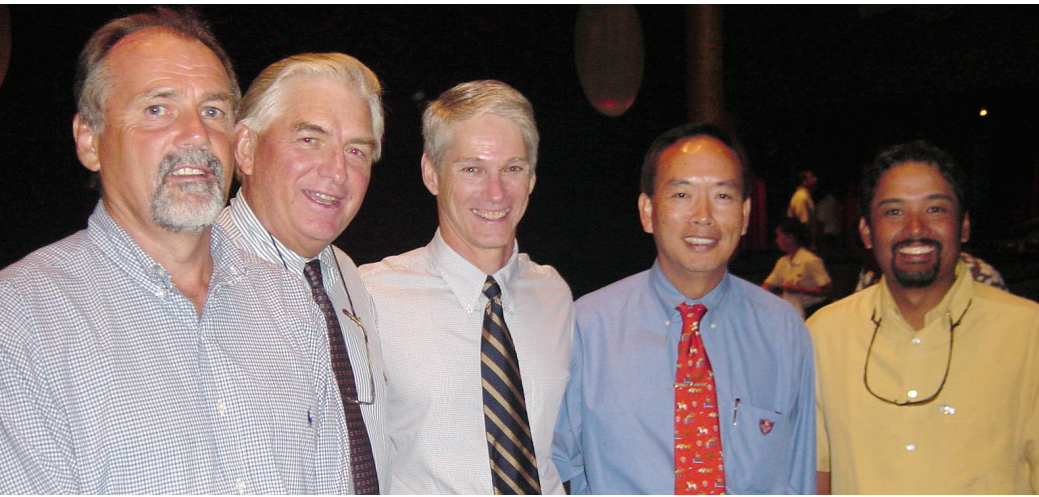
But as for the quality of water, Alcantara has a different opinion.

Alcantara, who was filling up a water bottle from a dispenser at a local store in Chalan Pago yesterday, said his water is anything but clear, and that there is too much chlorine in his tap water.

Although there are many problems with the island’s water system, Alcantara said the water agency is not to blame for all of



Business



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

From left, SGMA executive director Richard A. Pierce; Douglas C. Rogers, vice president for business administration of Polo Ralph Lauren Sourcing Co. Ltd.; Rexford Kosack, former CNMI attorney general; SGMA president James Lin; and Alex Sablan, president of the Saipan Chamber of Commerce shortly after the SGMA presentation at the Chamber meeting.

Future is uncertain for Saipan garment industry



Petitions filed with the Committee for Implementation of Textile Agreements, national election results, the world’s clothing manufacturers’ competitiveness, and local determination will map the short-term and long-term future for the 20-year old apparel industry on Saipan.

This is what over 175 businesspersons, government employees, and other stakeholders gathered to hear at the November monthly membership meeting of the Saipan Chamber of Commerce, where industry experts disclosed how the end of the world’s decades-old quota system of exporting into the largest—and most lucrative—apparel marketplace will play upon the local Saipan factory operations, local businesses that depend on the factories’ continuance and government revenue and essential service delivery to the islands’ residents.

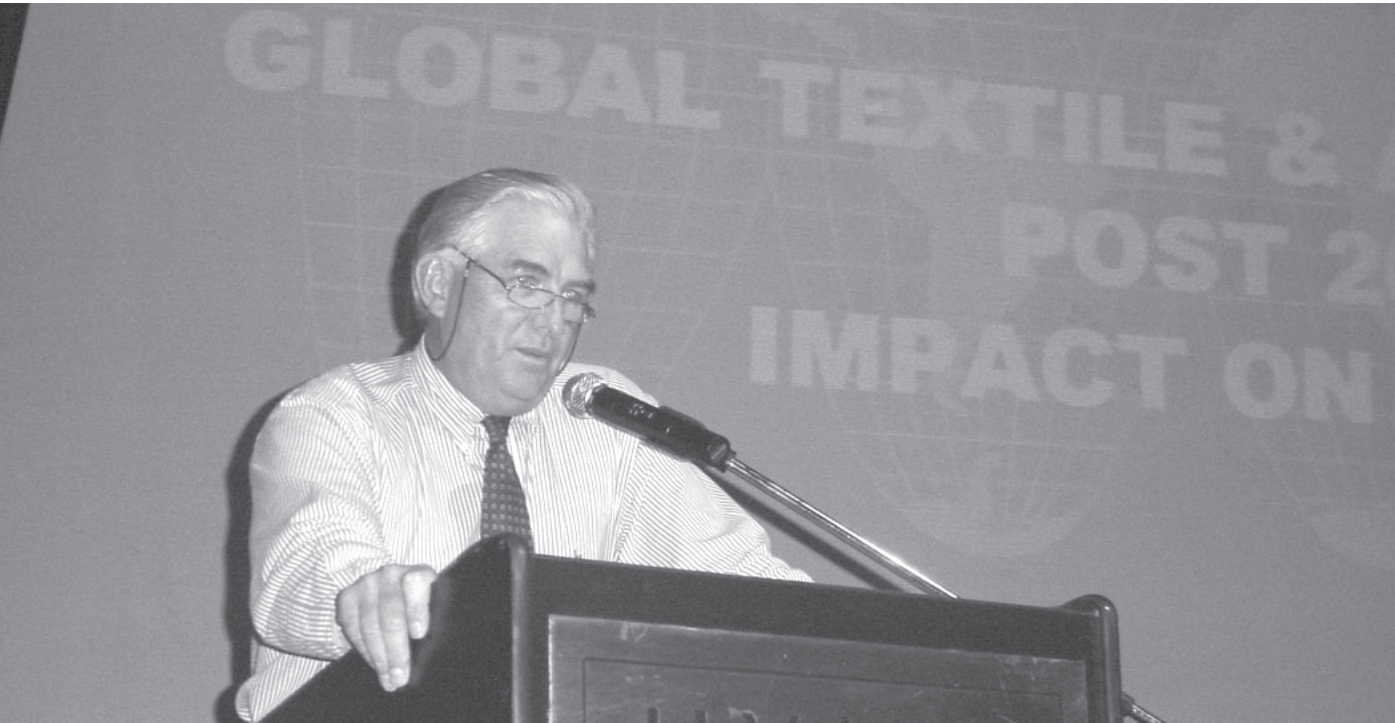
Several presenters took an attentive audience at the Hyatt Regency Saipan’s Sandcastle through a history of the Saipan garment industry, which first exported to the United States in 1983, brought a buyers’ and retailers’ perspective to continuance of highly sought orders for the world’s most famous clothing brand names, listened to the reality of the island’s second largest factory owner’s look into his own future and learned how the 25 locally licensed manufacturers will try to compete after a plethora of determining factors reveal themselves in the first year after the total phasing out of the quota system under the Multi-Fiber Arrangement.

The agreement, born at the

See **FUTURE** on Page 16

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Douglas C. Rogers, vice president for business administration of Polo Ralph Lauren Sourcing Co. Ltd. stresses a point during his presentation at the Chamber meeting.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

shell thanksgiving

FUTURE

From Page 15

Uruguay Round of Talks, also eliminated the old General Agreement for Textile and Trade and created the World Trade Organization in 1995.

A Timeline for the Industry

SGMA executive director Richard A. Pierce, who moderated the program, first introduced Rexford Kosack, an attorney in private practice, to provide the audience with a history of Saipan’s garment industry. Kosack was uniquely qualified to chronicle the industry, as the former CNMI Attorney General and head of the Office of Trade Counsel in 1986-1987. Kosack authored the *Report to the Governor on Policy Alternatives for the CNMI Garment Industry*.

It was the *Policy Alternatives for the CNMI Garment Industry* that outlined the basis for the later creation of the CNMI’s own version of a voluntary restraint and quota system; the still existing garment moratorium legislation that limits the number of factories, and factory employees, on the islands of the Northern Marianas.

As head of the Office of Trade Counsel, Kosack, and then Gov. Pedro P. Tenorio, are regarded by many to have stopped a federal threat to eliminate the industry and/or stop any chance of having the United States impose foreign country production quotas on the Commonwealth as early as 1986.

“On a note of optimism, the CNMI garment industry has survived several crises through wise stewardship of their industry and careful local government regulation...,” said Kosack.

Global Perspective

Next up was Douglas C. Rogers, vice president for Business Administration of Polo Ralph Lauren Sourcing Company Ltd., who spoke on behalf of his company’s long-term relationship with the CNMI, and as a U.S. brand name buyer in the worldwide marketplace.

Rogers outlined his company’s sourcing system, and like most buyers and retailers that exist in a highly competitive world of cost-conscious demanding customers, retailers most often maintain their relationships with their suppliers as long as cost, quality, deliverability and reliability are met. Saipan has met those expectations until today.

Rogers explained the impact that the quota elimination will have on their sourcing guidelines, and pointed out how China, with the world’s greatest potential for growth, will surely place pressure on many buyers to source a greater share of their orders from there.

Broken into two separate timeframes, from 2005-2008, and af-

ter 2008, Rogers anticipated that petitions being filed before CITA would limit China’s share of the U.S. domestic market, and therefore bring some short-term relief to other countries and Saipan. After 2008, this would be moot, as that ends petition filing before CITA.

Rogers ended by outlining—as his experience has offered a global perspective—possible solutions that Saipan may want to consider as a way to protect its valuable garment industry.

Focusing on wage rates, tax burden and a reduction in the value-added requirement for export under the CNMI’s trade incentive with the United States, Rogers said: “It’s all about staying competitive, and if not, then all you have to do is pick a date when Saipan manufacturing is over.

Ground Zero Perspective

James C. Lin, a 20-year Saipan resident and owner of United International Corp., a company with over 1,800 employees where there used to be 2,400, and chair of the Saipan Garment Manufacturers Association, focused on demonstrating, through his company’s performance over the past four years, what has happened to the industry’s viability.

Lin showed how styles of production have changed as a result of competition, how his workforce has had to be reduced, and how sales versus wage costs have greatly diminished his company’s profit, therefore, competitiveness.

Both Lin and Rogers expressed a desire to remain doing business together as long as they can, but both acknowledged the reality of what is at hand with CITA’s petition processing, a China and India that no one can gauge how long it will take to fully develop for sourcing for mainland buyers, and what will happen with the CNMI variables in local costs.

SGMA’s Pierce concluded the presentation by illustrating the industry’s contributions to the CNMI, its reduction in performance in sales and tax revenues and showed what any further reduction in sales would translate to in terms of spin-off revenue to local businesses, tax contributions and jobs.

An announcement was made that the SGMA and the Chamber of Commerce will offer another round of discussion before the CNMI Legislature in the next month, with new buyers from Asian sourcing offices to present their opinions and advice in hopes that they can continue doing business with the CNMI while prices, quality and performance are still competitive.

SGMA is comprised of 25 licensed apparel manufacturers on Saipan. The industry accounts for nearly 16,000 jobs directly in the factories and yields a third of budget revenue for the Commonwealth government. (AP)

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Senate OKs \$800B debt limit increase

WASHINGTON (AP)—A divided Senate approved an \$800 billion increase in the federal debt limit Wednesday, a major boost in borrowing that Sen. John Kerry and other Democrats blamed on the fiscal policies of President Bush.

The mostly party line, 52-44 vote was expected to be followed by House passage Thursday. Enactment would raise the government's borrowing limit to \$8.18 trillion—\$2.23 trillion higher than when Bush became president in 2001, and more than eight times the debt Pres-

ident Reagan faced when he took office in 1981.

In his first remarks on the Senate floor since his presidential bid ended in defeat two weeks ago, Kerry, D-Mass., said his former opponent had presided over "the worst fiscal turnaround in our nation's entire history."

He was referring to the change from the \$5.6 trillion in surpluses that were projected for the next 10 years when Bush took office in 2001, to the \$2.3 trillion in deficits now estimated for the coming decade. Kerry and other Democrats complained that

those bills will have to be paid by future generations.

"This can be called a birth tax, a birth tax that is dumped on the back of every American child unwillingly," said Kerry, who voted against the borrowing increase.

Republican senators did not join in the debate, underscoring how politically uncomfortable the measure is for them. That discomfort was highlighted when they refused to bring the bill to a vote before the elections.

Administration officials urged lawmakers to act quickly. The government reached its

\$7.38 trillion borrowing cap last month, and since then the Treasury Department has paid federal bills by taking cash from a civil service retirement account, which it plans to repay.

"We are nearing the end of our rope, and it is critical that Congress act," said Treasury spokesman Rob Nichols.

Failure to raise the debt ceiling could force a federal default and leave the government unable to pay Social Security recipients, federal workers and other obligations.

The Senate's debt-limit vote came as congressional bargainers

used the lame-duck session to put some finishing touches on a compromise \$388 billion spending measure to finance scores of agencies over the next 10 months.

That package—a combination of nine separate spending bills—will finance the heart of the government's domestic programs, everything except the departments of Defense and Homeland Security. The measures were supposed to be approved by last Oct. 1, when the government's budget year began.

In a letter to lawmakers, White House budget chief Joshua Bolten

threatened a veto if the bill grew in size. Legislative leaders have already decided to keep it within the bounds Bush wants—aided by about a 0.75 percent cut in all programs and reductions in a host of presidential priorities from community colleges to abstinence education.

Several legislative provisions that drew White House veto threats are also being dropped from the final bill, aides said. These include lifting restrictions on trade with Cuba and easing limits on aid to overseas family planning efforts.

FDA saw problems at vaccine plant in 2003

WASHINGTON (AP)—The Food and Drug Administration uncovered contamination and unsanitary conditions at a British flu vaccine manufacturing plant in 2003 but failed to re-inspect it until similar problems caused the loss of half the U.S. vaccine supply in October, the top FDA official said Wednesday.

FDA inspectors who visited the Chiron Corp. plant in Liverpool in June 2003 found records of bacteria concentrations a thousand times the expected level, said a report distributed by Democrats at a hearing of the House Government Reform Committee.

The preliminary inspection report from last month indicates in three places that deficiencies found in 2003 had not been corrected.

But acting FDA Commissioner Lester Crawford said the problems in 2003 and those that tainted this year's vaccine were unrelated. "The proof of that is

that the 2003 vaccine production was completed on schedule and none of it was condemned," Crawford said.

Rep. Henry Waxman, D-Calif., said Crawford's assertion was part of a "pattern of misleading statements." The FDA might have averted or at least mitigated the vaccine shortage if it had been vigilant, Waxman said.

Instead, he said, the FDA rejected the recommendations of its inspectors for a formal warning to Chiron and asked the company to correct problems voluntarily.

Even after Chiron indicated on Aug. 25 that several million doses of vaccine had been contaminated, Waxman said, the agency remained passive, relying on weekly conference calls with the company rather than a new inspection.

"My criticism is that the FDA didn't do enough to stay on top of this," he said in one of several tense exchanges with Crawford.

House GOP changes rules to protect DeLay

WASHINGTON (AP)—House Republicans demonstrated their loyalty to Majority Leader Tom DeLay on Wednesday, changing a party rule that would have cost him his leadership post if he were indicted by a Texas grand jury that has charged three of his associates.

DeLay watched from the back of the room but did not speak as GOP lawmakers struggled in closed session before ending a requirement that leaders indicted on felony charges relinquish their positions. Republicans will now decide a House leader's fate in a case-by-case review.

The change received overwhelming but not unanimous approval in a voice vote that



DeLay

showed Republicans' eagerness to protect the leader who raised countless campaign dollars for them. He also engineered a redistricting plan in Texas that caused five Democratic losses through retirement or election defeats.

The dilemma was to shield DeLay in a case that he views as political, while not giving blanket protection to any leader indicted for a crime that clearly has no political overtones. During the closed debate that spanned four hours, with breaks, someone even questioned whether a leader charged with murder could retain his or her post, according to a House aide who was present. Such questions would be handled in the case-by-case review.

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Texas woman killed, swept away in flood

SAN ANTONIO (AP)—Torrential thunderstorms caused flash floods that drowned one woman who was swept from a bridge. A second person was missing.

Firefighters discovered the woman’s body late Tuesday. Witnesses told police they saw the woman trying to walk across the bridge over a creek even though a Public Works Department employee warned her not to. She was not immediately identified.

Crews delayed their search Wednesday of the Blanco River near San Marcos for 24-year-old Laurie Pineda, whose car was swept away Sunday as she tried to drive through a low-water crossing. The river had risen 11 feet in two hours.

Several tornados were also reported in the region, including in Austin, San Antonio and Gillespie County. No injuries were immediately reported.

Many areas around central Texas and the Texas Hill Country received 5 to 8 inches of rain from Sunday through Wednesday morning, the National Weather Service said. The rain stopped in Austin by mid-afternoon.

Two girls accused of serving poisoned cake

MARIETTA, Ga. (AP)—Two seventh-grade girls were arrested on charges that they served poisoned cake at their middle school cafeteria to about a dozen students who became ill and

had to be taken to the hospital.

Lawyers for the girls said the cake was a prank, and that they had no intention to harm anyone. Lab tests showed the icing on the cornbread cake contained an expired prescription drug, bleach, clay and tabasco sauce.

“They took it into the cafeteria at lunch time and began passing it out to students, just whoever would take a piece,” said Jay Dillon, spokesman for the Cobb County School District in suburban Atlanta.

Some of the students started vomiting after eating the cake, officials said. Eleven of the students, mostly seventh graders, were treated at a hospital and released, Dillon said.

“There was some hysteria, from what I understand,” Detective Dwayne Delk said.

The 13-year-old girls appeared Wednesday before a Juvenile Court judge who refused their attorneys’ request to allow them to go home. The judge will reconsider the request on Friday.

Peterson defense seeks jury for penalty

REDWOOD CITY, Calif. (AP)—Scott Peterson’s defense wants to seat a new jury in another county to weigh whether Peterson deserves to die for the murders of his pregnant wife and the fetus she carried, according to a motion filed Wednesday.

Defense lawyer Mark Geragos filed the motion Wednesday in San Mateo County Superior Court. Specific details will not be made public until after Judge Alfred A. Delucchi reviews the

file Monday morning before the scheduled start of the penalty phase.

The 32-year-old former fertilizer salesman was convicted Friday on one count of first-degree murder in the death of Laci Peterson and one count of second-degree murder for the killing of the fetus.

Jurors must decide whether to sentence Peterson to life in prison or death. The penalty phase is expected to last about four days.

Beyond the change in venue, Geragos is seeking to empanel an entirely new jury to decide Peterson’s fate.

In February, Geragos also sought to have two juries seated for the trial, one for the guilt phase and one for the penalty phase.

At the time, he contended that “the vast adverse publicity, the abnormally high prejudging of guilt and the strong statistical showings that a death-qualified jury tilts in the favor of the prosecution” supported his request.

Fired Baltimore police chief sues city

BALTIMORE (AP)—The former police commissioner has filed a lawsuit claiming he was wrongfully fired last week after law enforcement officials met with federal authorities to discuss an ongoing probe into city corruption.

In the suit filed Tuesday, Kevin Clark seeks to be reinstated as police commissioner and awarded \$60 million in compensatory and punitive damages.

Clark, 48, claims in the suit that Mayor Martin O’Malley illegally fired him “at a critical stage of several sensitive investigations” being

conducted by the Baltimore Police Department into possible official misconduct and criminal conduct.

Clark said he was terminated Nov. 10 just 48 hours after the chief of the department’s internal investigative division conferred with federal authorities about the probe.

City Solicitor Ralph S. Tyler said Wednesday the suit is “totally lacking in merit. We will defend it aggressively and we will prevail.”

O’Malley said he fired Clark because domestic abuse allegations against the police chief had become a distraction from the fight against crime.

Big Dig leaks worse than thought

BOSTON (AP)—Leaks in the Big Dig highway tunnel system are more widespread than officials have acknowledged, and top construction managers warned as far back as six years ago about problems that could cause waterproofing failures, records show.

Documents obtained by The Boston Globe show there are nearly 700 leaks in a single 1,000-foot section of an Interstate 93 tunnel. And project managers have collectively signed off on at least \$10 million in cost overruns to repair leaks and water damage since early 2001, the records show.

Earlier this month, a team of independent engineers hired by the state to investigate a massive September leak had said the Big Dig project was riddled with more than 400 leaks throughout the system. Project managers and state officials have insisted that the tunnels are safe for drivers.

The leaks are the latest embar-

rassing chapter for the Big Dig, the costliest highway project in U.S. history. The \$14.6 billion project was designed to ease traffic congestion in Boston with a system of underground tunnels, but it was five years late and billions of dollars over cost and plagued by allegations of fraud, waste and mismanagement. The last major leg of the project was finished last year.

Amtrak begins random ID checks on trains

WASHINGTON (AP)—Amtrak conductors have begun random checks of passengers’ IDs as a precaution against terrorist attacks. The onboard checks, which started at the beginning of November, are part of a broader program to improve security, Amtrak spokesman Cliff Black said.

“It is a ticket verification program, which is not intended to determine a person’s identity, but to make sure the person who’s traveling with the ticket is the person whose name is on the ticket,” Black said.

The checks have not resulted in any arrests, he said.

Amtrak also is requiring passengers to show identification when buying a ticket at ticket counters and to tag all luggage with the owner’s address.

The passenger railroad has started to ask people to be alert for suspicious activity on trains and at stations.

The security program is the result of a federal directive, issued in May, to protect rail passengers from terrorism. Amtrak has been randomly inspecting trains and baggage with canine teams since then, Black said.

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VERIZON
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21 Pacific Rim nations meet on trade, security

SANTIAGO, Chile (AP)—Top ministers from 21 Pacific Rim nations convened high-level talks on free trade and global security Wednesday, while police battled university students protesting the summit and a weekend visit by President Bush.

Several hundred demonstrators who tried to gather in downtown Santiago were confronted by riot police, who doused them with tear gas from fast-moving jeeps and knocked them to the ground with blasts from water cannon trucks.

There was no immediate report of injuries and the protest occurred miles away from the suburban Santiago venue for the annual Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation forum.

Protesters voiced a range of causes, including opposition to the U.S.-led war in Iraq and concern that unfettered capitalism widens the gap between rich and poor.

It was the second straight day of protests and more are expected this week, including a government-authorized

march on Friday through the streets of Santiago.

APEC foreign ministers and trade ministers were to meet Wednesday and Thursday on issues ranging from fighting terrorism and corruption to a proposal to create a free trade area that would link the Americas to Asia. Leaders will gather Saturday and Sunday.

The ministers will discuss a recent proposal by APEC Business Advisory Council, the group's business lobby, to consider creating a Free Trade Area of the Asia-Pacific that would stretch from China to California and from Australia to Chile's southern tip.

Hernan Somerville, a Chilean who heads the advisory council, said such a zone "could bring significant economic benefit to the region as a whole" by slashing tariffs and opening markets.

The group asked APEC leaders to establish a task force to study the issue, but a trade zone spanning the Pacific Ocean would take years to create.

Car bomber attacks US convoy in Iraq

BAGHDAD, Iraq (AP)—A suicide car bomber blasted an American convoy north of Baghdad and U.S. troops battled insurgents west of the capital Wednesday as a wave of violence across Iraq's Sunni Muslim heartland killed at least 27 people.

American forces pursued their search-and-destroy mission against the remaining holdouts in the former insurgent bastion of Fallujah, and to the north, American forces pressed an offensive to reclaim part of the city of Mosul from militants.

November became one of Iraq's bloodiest months as the U.S. death toll in the war in Iraq reached 1,206 with new Defense Department identifications Tuesday night and Wednesday, according to an Associated Press tally.

On Wednesday, a suicide attacker drove his bomb-laden car into a U.S. convoy during fierce fighting in the town of Beiji, 155 miles north of the Baghdad, killing 10 people and wounding 12, including three American soldiers. Another attack on a convoy of civilian contractors in Beiji caused no casualties.

Elsewhere, a three-hour gunbattle between militants



U.S. troops take cover after they came under fire following a car bomb which rammed into a civilian convoy along Baghdad's airport road, setting vehicles on fire, Wednesday Nov. 17 2004.

and U.S. forces after night-fall left seven people dead and 13 hurt in Ramadi, a city west of Fallujah.

Insurgents fired rocket-propelled grenades, mortar and Kalashnikov rifles at American forces in the city center, Zayout district and along the main highway in town, said Abdel Karim al-Hiti of Rama-

di General Hospital.

Ramadi, about 70 miles west of Baghdad, falls within the restive Sunni Triangle area north and west of the capital where the bulk of insurgent attacks have erupted.

Although fighting has ebbed in Fallujah, it has not ceased. The U.S. military said pockets of insurgents remain even

though the city is fully occupied by American troops.

On Wednesday, heavy machine-gun fire and explosions rang out in south-central parts of the city as U.S. Marines hunted remaining fighters. In the northern Jolan neighborhood, Marines seven insurgents who officers said had sneaked back into the city by swimming the Euphrates River.

Bullets snapped overhead, and Iraqis collecting bodies of the dead ran for cover behind walls and in buildings as Marines returned fire. After 15 minutes of fighting, three insurgents were dead and one Marine was slightly injured in the hand, officers said.

The rush of warplanes streaking through the low-lying clouds shook the city and blasts sent smoke into the sky. The U.S. military said airstrikes Wednesday were concentrated in southwestern Fallujah, destroying enemy positions.

Iraqi officials have acknowledged that insurgent leaders Omar Hadid and Sheik Abdullah al-Janabi, along with Jordanian terror boss Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, have not been captured and may have slipped away.

shell visor
cmyk

Russia developing new nuclear missile

MOSCOW (AP)—Russia is developing a new nuclear missile system unlike any weapon held by other countries, President Vladimir Putin said Wednesday, a move that could serve as a signal to the United States as Washington pushes forward with a missile defense system.

Putin gave no details about the system or why Russia was pursuing it, and it was unclear whether the Kremlin’s cash-strapped armed forces could even afford an expensive new weapon.

But in remarks that could also be aimed at a domestic audience, he told a meeting of the top leadership of the armed forces that the system could be deployed soon, the ITAR-Tass news agency reported.

“We are not only conducting

research and successful tests on state-of-the-art nuclear missile systems, but I am convinced that these systems will appear in the near future,” Putin said. “Moreover, they will be systems, weapons that not a single other nuclear power has, or will have, in the near future.”

“We’ll continue our efforts to build our armed forces and its nuclear component,” he said.

ITAR-Tass indicated the new system could be a mobile version of the Topol-M ballistic missile, which have been deployed in silos since 1998. But Alexander Pikayev, a senior military analyst with Moscow’s Institute for Global Economy and International Relations, said Putin seemed to be referring to the Bulava interconti-

ental ballistic missile, a solid fuel missile that had its first test in September.

“Putin apparently wanted to boast the success of his military reform effort ... to both the military and the broad public,” Pikayev told The Associated Press. “His statement also intended to show that Russia is regaining its status as a great power which can’t be ignored.”

Russian officials had stated earlier that the Bulava could be developed in both sea- and land-based versions and equipped with warheads capable of penetrating missile defense, Pikayev said.

He said if the Bulava proves capable, it would represent a major success because it would show that Russia has succeeded

in modernizing its missile forces despite the shortage of funds.

“It will ring the bell for the Americans, forcing Washington to reassess its estimates,” Pikayev said.

White House spokesman Scott McClellan said it wasn’t news to the Bush administration, and that President Bush and Putin had discussed the issue previously. He emphasized there were agreements in place to reduce the two countries’ nuclear arsenals and noted Moscow is now a partner in the war on terrorism.

“This is not something that we look at as new,” he said. “We are very well aware of their long-standing modernization efforts for their military.... We are allies now in the

global war on terrorism.”

McClellan suggested that close ties between Bush and Putin makes alarm unnecessary—but doesn’t eliminate Washington’s concern.

“We have a very different relationship than we did in the Cold War,” he said. “The fact that we do have a good relationship enables us to speak very directly to our Russian friends.”



Palestinian inquiry probes Arafat’s death

RAMALLAH, West Bank (AP)—Palestinian Prime Minister Ahmed Qureia ordered an inquiry Wednesday to determine the cause of death of former leader Yasser Arafat.

The commission will take testimony from Palestinian and other Arab doctors in an effort to remove questions surrounding the Palestinian leader’s death in a French military hospital last week, a statement from Qureia’s office said.

Citing privacy rules, the Percy Military Training Hospital, where Arafat died, has refused to publicly reveal his cause of death or hand over medical records to anyone but his widow Suha, who has remained silent.

The secrecy has caused some Palestinian leaders to charge Arafat was poisoned, though Foreign Minister Nabil Shaath has ruled that out.

Jordanian neurologist Ashraf al-Kurdi, who attended the ailing Arafat at his West Bank headquarters in Ramallah before he was flown to Ramallah, has called for an autopsy.

Bombings at two Buenos Aires banks kill 1

BUENOS AIRES, Argentina (AP)—Homemade bombs exploded in two Buenos Aires banks before they opened Wednesday, killing a security guard, police said.

The explosions occurred near ATM machines in branches belonging to Citibank and Banco Galicia, damaging the building’s facades and shattering windows, officials said. No group A 38-year-old security guard was killed at a Citibank branch in downtown Buenos Aires, said German Fernandez, a spokesman for a private ambulance service.

Police said they also deactivated two explosive devices, and at least one officer was injured after authorities detonated a bomb found inside a second Citibank branch.

Banks remain a flashpoint of public anger following Argentina’s 2001-2 economic crisis. Billions of dollars in bank accounts held by Argentines were frozen as the government tried to thwart a run on the banks and prop up a tottering financial system.

Group: Iran bought nuclear bomb drawings

VIENNA, Austria (AP)—Iran bought blueprints of a nuclear bomb from the same black-market network that gave Libya such diagrams and continues to enrich uranium despite a commitment to suspend the technology that can be used for atomic weapons, an Iranian opposition group said Wednesday.

Farid Soleimani, a senior official for the National Council for Resistance in Iran, did not offer evidence for the claims. His group has said in the past that it gets information on Iran’s nuclear program from opposition sources within Iran, including some moles who have infiltrated the Islamic Republic’s military and security organizations.

Mark Gwozdecky, spokesman for the U.N. International Atomic Energy Agency said, “we follow up every solid lead,” but added the U.N. nuclear watchdog would have no further comment.

Soleimani said the diagram was provided by Abdul Qadeer Khan, the Pakistani head of the nuclear network linked to clandestine programs in both Iran and Libya.

Ivory Coast refugees surge into Liberia

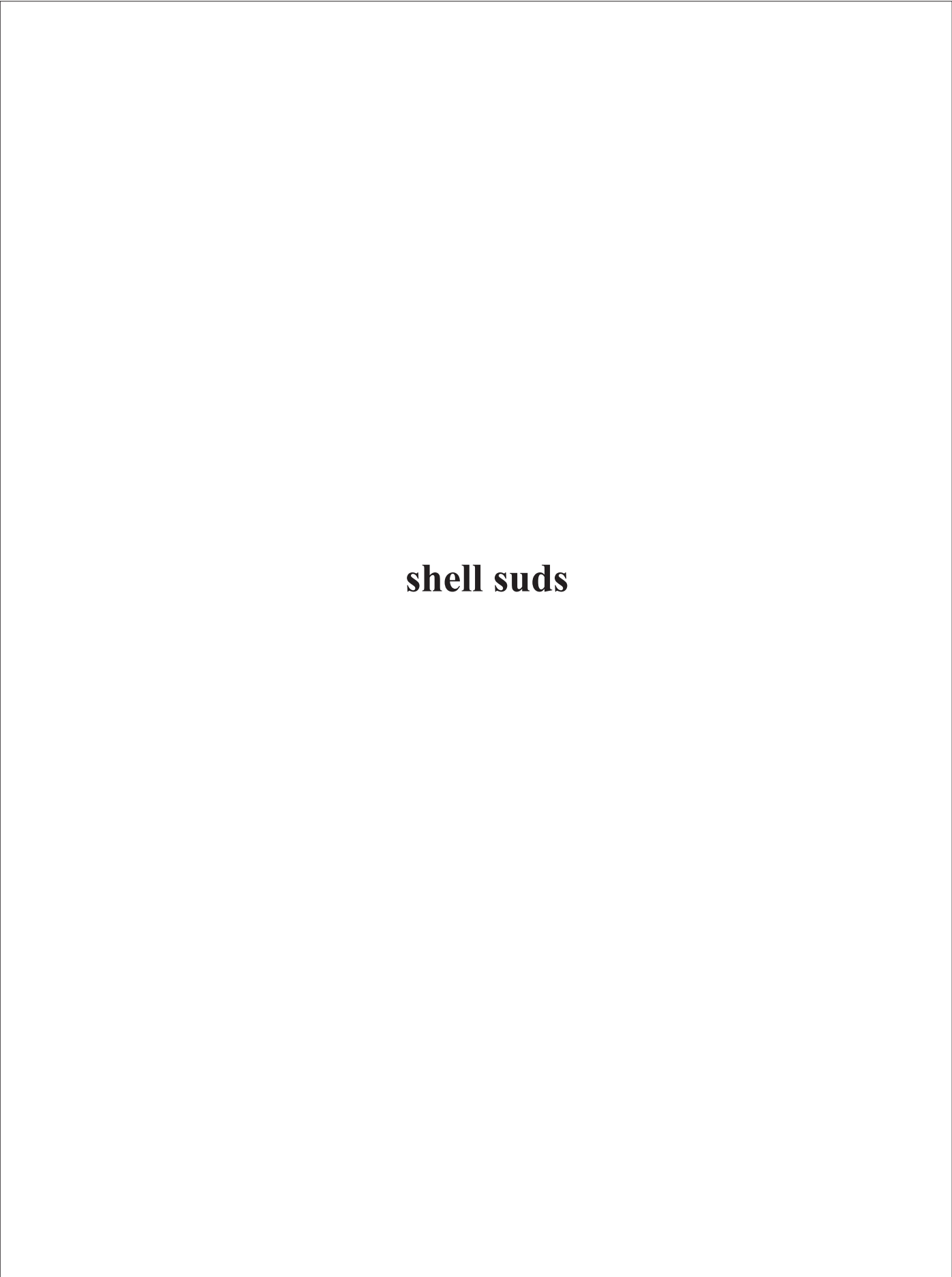
BLIMIPLAY, Liberia (AP)—Frightened and in search of food, shelter and peace, thousands of refugees surged across the border Wednesday from Ivory Coast, West Africa’s longtime economic bastion, paddling across the river frontier by canoe to escape growing turmoil at home.

Poor survivors of Liberia’s 15 years of vicious civil wars—which only recently ended—were amazed to find themselves opening their homes to civilians fleeing what for decades was West Africa’s most peaceful and prosperous nation.

The influx is a signal of the upheaval that Ivory Coast’s 2-week-old crisis threatens to unleash on a fragile region.

“We came in search of life,” Adam Toure, a 37-year-old Ivorian, told The Associated Press on the first visit by journalists to the border, after he walked for four days from the west Ivory Coast town of Danane.

“But things are tough here,” Toure said, looking around him at his forest-ringed new home in exile. “There is no food, no water.”

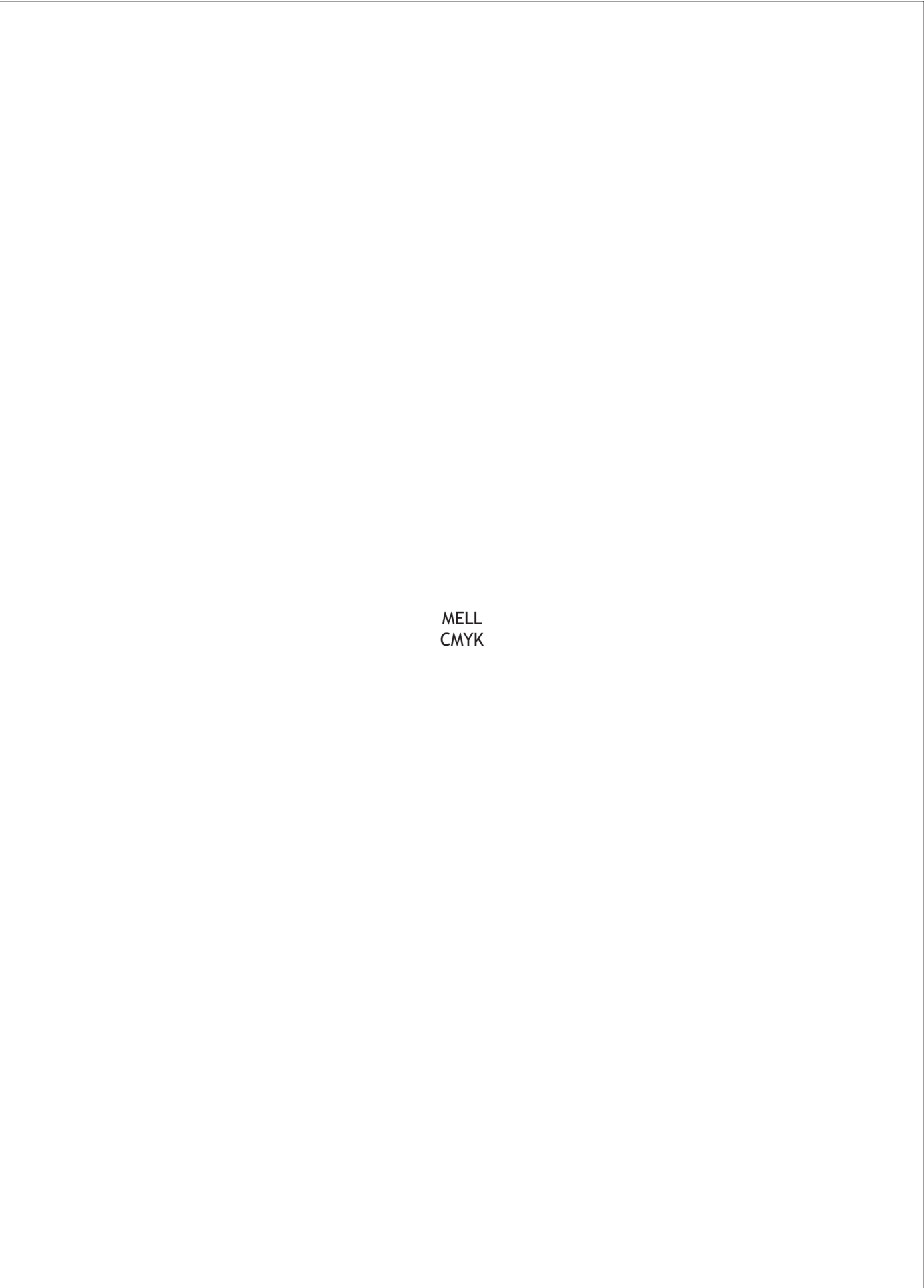


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Life & Style



“When great visuals are combined with great music, the effect is nothing short of magic. Next time you’re at the theater, don’t just watch—listen. You may be opening yourself up to a whole new world of enjoyment at the multiplex.”



By JOE WEINDL
Special to the
Saipan Tribune

WALLACE

RECOMMENDED VIEWING

Great pickings from the science fiction aisle



If you're well beyond your teens, but you still own an Xbox and/or a PS2, and spent the last couple months drooling over the release date of Halo 2...If you know the meaning of "RPG"...If you've watched enough TechTV to know that Morgan is totally hot...If you know the difference between the Romulans and the Sith...

...then you, my friend, are a major nerd. I'm guessing you've got no date tonight. Should you decide to give your thumbs a break for a couple hours, you might be tempted to pick up a copy of *The Chronicles of Riddick*, Vin Diesel's action sci-fi released on DVD this week. *Riddick* isn't a terrible movie, but I've seen much better. Here are a few quality sci-fi movies you may have previously overlooked.



By JOE WEINDL
Special to the
Saipan Tribune

The Arrival (1996)

Twohy's debut as a writer/director, *The Arrival* is a terrific alien invasion thriller. A veteran screenwriter, with a couple intelligent movies to his credit (*The Fugitive*, *Waterworld*), Twohy keeps *The Arrival* moving at a frenetic pace, from start to finish, and does a great job creating a creepy atmosphere, offering a generous helping of suspense. While most sci-fi movies might make you laugh, unintentionally, with idiotic premises that are a whole lot closer to fiction than science, *The Arrival* pushes the limits of reality just far enough to make it interesting, while staying close enough to plausibility to keep you from scoffing at it.

**Soldier (1998)**

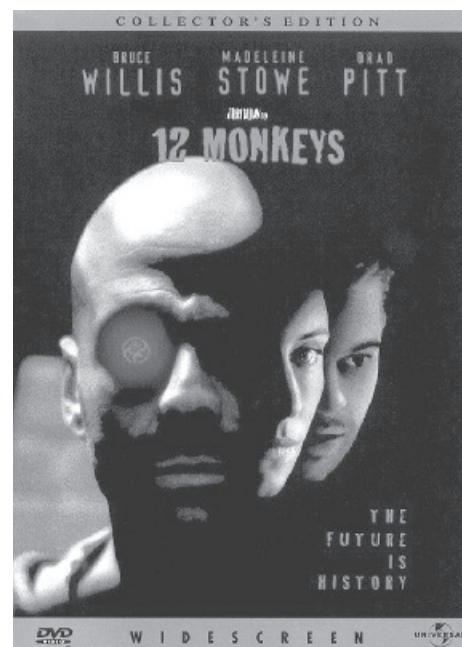
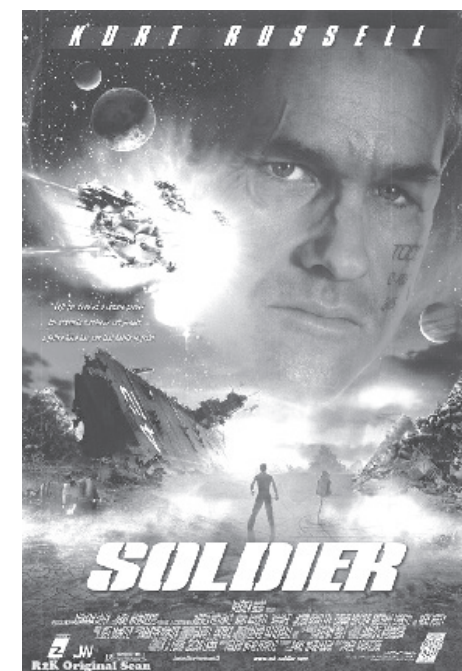
At first glance, *Soldier* is cheap remake of a bad Jean Claude Van Damme action movie. When it opened in theaters, it made a paltry \$14 million, and most critics HATED it. I don't care; I think it's good, albeit not great, and one of the most underrated sci-fi movies of all time. *Soldier* stars Kurt Russell as a military man, trained from birth, to be a ruthless killing machine. When the next generation of super-killers are unveiled, Russell's character becomes obsolete, and is left to die on a barren planet.

Like so many of the movies he's starred in, Kurt Russell is also highly underrated, one of the best actors in Hollywood. In what could've been a worthless action flick, Russell, almost single-handedly, makes *Soldier* worth watching. His portrayal of a soldier who knows only how to kill, trying to fit in with a peaceful community, while coping with his loss of worth, is subtle and inspired, and makes *Soldier* a much better movie than it should be.

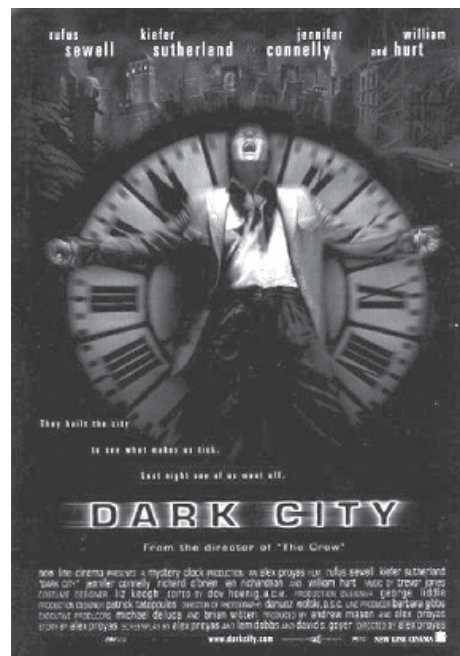
12 Monkeys (1995)

Starring Bruce Willis and Brad Pitt, *12 Monkeys* is a trippy, chaotic, mind-bending apocalyptic fantasy, and one of the most thoroughly enjoyable sci-fi movies of all time. Willis plays a convict, traveling through time to earn time off for good behavior, trying to piece together the events that led to rapid spread of disease, and mankind's departure from Earth's surface to live underground.

The script for *12 Monkeys* is ingenious, with endless creative twists, and both Pitt and Willis put in the performances of a lifetime. Pretty much anyone should enjoy it, but for sci-fi nerds, *12 Monkeys* is a must-see.

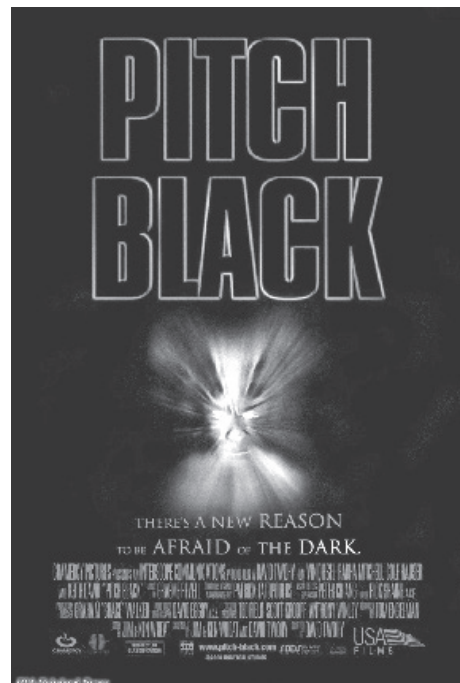
**Dark City (1998)**

Dark City is, without a doubt, one of the most original sci-fi movies ever made. It combines, with incredible results, film noir and sci-fi. It features beautiful, yet haunting imagery, and a script that will keep your mind racing from start to finish. Like *The Matrix*, *Dark City* follows a man who feels like his surroundings aren't quite right, and searches for explanations to his questions. Also, as with *The Matrix*, I'd be completely spoiling your movie-watching experience if I explained any more than I already have (by the way, shame on all of you who told your friends what *The Matrix* is about).

**Pitch Black (2000)**

Before he was making teenage girls scream in movies like *The Fast and the Furious* and *XXX*, Vin Diesel made his starring debut in *Pitch Black*, the predecessor to *The Chronicles of Riddick*, both written/directed by David Twohy. Diesel had played in a couple of smaller rolls (*Saving Private Ryan*) prior to *Pitch Black*, but this is when he was allowed to unleash the ultra-cool bad boy image we now know him by, and he plays it perfectly. *Riddick*, in my opinion, is the coolest antihero since Clint Eastwood played "The Man with No Name" in *The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly*.

A million movies have tried to remake *Alien*. Add *Pitch Black* to that list. Unlike all the other cheap knock-offs, though, *Pitch Black* is a worthy rehash of the James Cameron classic. *Pitch Black* has a smart script with an interesting power struggle amongst its characters, an imaginative new world with creative new monsters, and thrilling action. And *Riddick* is one bad mofo!



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THE INCREDIBLES
Mon-Thur 4:15 7:15
Friday 4:15 7:15 10:15
Saturday 10:30 1:15 4:15 7:15 10:15
Sunday 10:30 1:15 4:15 7:15
Voices of Craig T. Nelson • Holly Hunter
(Animation)
UNRESTRICTED PG

The Grudge
Mon-Thur 4:00
Friday 4:00
Saturday 10:45 1:45 4:00
Sunday 10:45 1:45 4:00
Sarah Michelle Gellar • Jason Behr
(Thriller)
UNRESTRICTED PG13

Seed of Chucky
Mon-Thur 7:45
Friday 7:45 10:00
Saturday 7:45 10:00
Sunday 7:45 10:00
Jennifer Tilly • Brad Dourif
(Horror)
UNRESTRICTED R

After the Sunset
Mon-Thur 4:30 7:00
Friday 4:30 7:00 9:45
Saturday 10:15 1:15 4:30 7:00 9:45
Sunday 10:15 1:15 4:30 7:00
Pierce Brosnan • Salma Hayek
(Action)
UNRESTRICTED G

THE POLAR EXPRESS
Mon-Thur 4:45 7:15
Friday 4:45 7:15 9:45
Saturday 10:45 1:45 4:45 7:15 9:45
Sunday 10:45 1:45 4:45 7:15
Voices of Tom Hanks • Daryl Sabara
(Animation)
RESTRICTED PG

Synopsis
Santa Claus does not exist. Or does he? For one doubting boy (voice of Daryl Sabara and Tom Hanks), an astonishing event occurs. Late on Christmas Eve night, he lies in bed hoping to hear the sound of reindeer bells from Santa's sleigh. When to his surprise, a steam engine's roar and whistle can be heard outside his window. The conductor (voice of Tom Hanks) invites him on board to take an extraordinary journey to the North Pole with many other pajama-clad children.

NEW MOVIES

Bridge Jones: The Edge of Reason
Mon-Thur 4:30 7:45
Friday 4:30 7:45 10:00
Saturday 10:30 1:30 4:30 7:45 10:00
Sunday 10:30 1:30 4:30 7:45
Renée Zellweger • Hugh Grant
(Comedy Drama)
UNRESTRICTED R

SPONGEBOB SQUAREPANTS
Mon-Thur 4:15 7:30
Friday 4:15 7:30 9:30
Saturday 10:45 1:15 4:15 7:30 9:30
Sunday 10:45 1:15 4:15 7:30
Voices of Tom Kenny • Alec Baldwin
(Animation/Comedy)
RESTRICTED PG

National Treasure
Mon-Thur 4:15 7:15
Friday 4:15 7:15 9:45
Saturday 10:15 1:30 4:15 7:15 9:45
Sunday 10:15 1:30 4:15 7:15
Nicolas Cage • Diane Kruger
(Action Adventure)
NO PASSES PG

Synopsis
Benjamin Franklin Gates descends from a family of treasure-seekers who've all hunted for the same thing: a war chest hidden by the Founding Fathers after the Revolutionary War. Ben's close to discovering its whereabouts, as is his competition, but the FBI is also hip to the hunt.

R-rated films require photo I.D.

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Jude Law is latest 'Sexiest Man Alive'

NEW YORK (AP)—Jude Law, star of "Alfie" and "I (Heart) Huckabee," has been named this year's "Sexiest Man Alive" by People magazine. "What's he all about? Supernatural good looks, supsize talent—and so nice, he might just kiss you if you have the nerve to ask," People says in its latest issue.

Besides "Alfie" and "I (Heart) Huckabee," Law has starred this year in "Sky Captain and the World of Tomorrow" and the upcoming "Closer," "The Aviator" and "Lemony Snicket's A Series of Unfortunate Events."

Naomi Watts, who starred with Law in "I (Heart) Huckabee," describes the 31-year-old actor as "the most beautiful man who ever walked the Earth."

Law, divorced from Sadie Frost and now dating his "Alfie" co-star Sienna Miller, told The Associated Press recently that despite his sex symbol status, he's no Lothario.

"I grew up, I suppose, always looking for commitment and looking for a relationship, and that's why I got married so young. ... And I'm in another relationship now," he said. "So that just seems to be my pattern."

People also picked nine "off the charts" sexy superstars: Orlando Bloom, Jake Gyllenhaal, Usher, Colin Farrell, Brad Pitt, Matt Damon, Ben Affleck, Bruce Willis and Johnny Depp.

Us Weekly named Jesse Metcalfe, who plays Eva Longoria's on-screen gardener on "Desperate Housewives," as the sexiest man on television.

Longoria describes Metcalfe as "a sweet young man" whose role calls for "a smoldering sexiness that justifies me having an affair—and he definitely does that!"

The magazine's list of TV's 10 Hottest Men also includes Shane West of "ER," Josh Duhamel of "Las Vegas" and Matthew Fox of "Lost."

Disney relaunches Muppets on Web site

LOS ANGELES (AP)—Kermit, Miss Piggy, Gonzo and their pals are starring in their own Web site—the first in a series of new creative efforts launched by The Walt Disney Co. since buying the Muppets in April.

"Today is the first day of the Muppets being back," said Chris Curtin, general manager and vice president of Muppet Holding Co., the group formed by Disney to manage the characters.

The site, which debuted Wednesday, features games, biographies of the Muppet characters, screensavers and news about current projects, including the new film "The Muppets Wonderful Wizard of Oz," slated to air on ABC next May.

The movie is the first since "It's a Very Merry Muppet Christmas Movie," which aired on NBC in 2002. It features singer Ashanti as Dorothy, Queen Latifah as Auntie Em and director Quentin Tarantino in a cameo role as himself.



This cover supplied by People Magazine, features a photo of actor Jude Law.

Ja Rule's manager arrested in New York

NEW YORK (AP)—Ja Rule's manager was arrested Wednesday as part of an investigation into the music label once known as Murder Inc.

Ron "Gutta" Robinson, 29, was arraigned on money laundering charges in federal court and released on \$500,000 bond.

Defense attorney Stacey Richman said her client would contest the charges, but declined to comment further.

Robinson was accused of conspiring with other unidentified suspects to launder more than \$1 million between 1997 and 2002. He allegedly "knew and believed that some of the laundered funds were the proceeds of ... a controlled substance," the indictment said.

Federal prosecutors are probing ties between drug dealers and Murder Inc., the recording home of hip-hop star Ja Rule

and other platinum-selling acts such as Ashanti. Last week, the label's bookkeeper was indicted, also on money laundering charges.

Murder Inc. changed its name to The Inc. earlier this year after executives said the label's image was hurt by court filings alleging that they had been laundering drug money from a crack dealer, Kenneth "Supreme" McGriff.

Tony Soprano, Paulie Walnuts visit troops

LOS ANGELES (AP)—Even TV mobsters have a soft spot for U.S. troops serving abroad. James Gandolfini and Tony Sirico of HBO's "The Sopranos" are on a USO-Armed Forces Entertainment tour in the Persian Gulf, the USO said Wednesday.

Gandolfini, who stars as mob boss Tony Soprano, and Sirico, who plays Paulie Walnuts, are signing autographs, posing for pictures and watching movies with the troops, the organization said.

The trip is part of the USO-AFE tradition of bringing celebrities to the "front lines" of combat activities, the USO said. Among those who have participated this year are Wayne New-



In this photo supplied by USO, James Gandolfini, who stars as the mobster Tony Soprano in the HBO hit cable series "The Sopranos" poses with a bust of Saddam Hussein during a visit to Camp Doha, Kuwait, on Tuesday, November 16, 2004.

ton, 50 Cent, Toby Keith, Tom Green and Rob Schneider.

It was not clear whether the actors visited Iraq. For security purposes, details about the trip

were being withheld, including specific locations they were visiting and how long they were in the region, USO spokeswoman Donna St. John said.

Son's high school sweetheart revels in college without him

By ABIGAIL VAN BUREN

DEAR ABBY: My son, "Glenn," and his girlfriend of two years, "Nancy," have started college at different universities. Nancy made the cheerleading squad, and now it has gone to her head.

Nancy was never popular in high school, but now that she is, she has decided she no longer wants anything to do with Glenn. She acts very spoiled and wants everything her way.

Nancy told my son she likes being away from her parents and him, so she can do what she wants, when she wants. Glenn is worried sick about her. He thinks she's going to get in over her head. His father and I tell him he needs to move on. I know he loves Nancy, so how can we get him to forget her?



Dear Abby

WORRIED IN KANSAS

DEAR WORRIED: College is a time for growth, and in this case, the two young lovers have grown in different directions. Encourage your son to become more active at school, to study hard and to make a point of meeting new people. As much as he cares about Nancy, she has declared her independence. Since he can't protect her, he should concentrate his energies on taking care of himself. Time and distraction will heal what's ailing him.

DEAR ABBY: Ten years ago, my fiancé, "Rick," and his then-wife, "Kim," lost their son shortly after birth. They had him cremated. Much to Rick's horror, Kim disposed of their baby's ashes in a Dumpster. She said she never wanted the baby in the first place.

Rick was devastated, as was the entire family. Kim acted very shut off and cold, not only during this tragic event, but with their other children as well.

Every year on the anniversary of his son's death, Rick breaks down and I grieve beside him. Is there anything I can have made (or make myself) in honor of the child? I feel it would ease the minds of those who were truly bereaved and let the baby boy rest in peace.

WANTS TO HELP

DEAR WANTS: I'm unclear from your letter whether Rick's wife was distant during their entire marriage, or whether she might have been suffering from depression (and possibly psychosis) after the death of the baby. Because her behavior was bizarre, I can only hope she received medical and psychological care.

That you want to honor your fiancé's child is commendable, but before doing anything, talk to Rick and ask what he would like. Planting a tree in a park with a small plaque would make a nice memorial—or perhaps a scholarship in the baby's name.

DEAR ABBY: During professional meetings or events, people I work with ask me if I'm married or seeing anyone. Since these are not friends, but rather professional associates, I don't feel this question is appropriate. I would never think to ask someone such a personal question.

What is an appropriate response to these individuals that conveys it's none of their business without coming across as rude?

STRICTLY BUSINESS IN D.C.

DEAR STRICTLY BUSINESS: The people who are asking you that question are probably just trying to be friendly or to get to know you better. However, since you prefer not to answer the question directly, reply, "When I know you better, perhaps we can discuss it," and change the subject.

Dear Abby is written by Abigail Van Buren, also known as Jeanne Phillips, and was founded by her mother, Pauline Phillips. Write Dear Abby at www.DearAbby.com or P.O. Box 69440, Los Angeles, CA 90069.

Good advice for everyone—teens to seniors—is in "The Anger in All of Us and How to Deal With It." To order, send a business-size, self-addressed envelope, plus check or money order for \$5 (U.S. funds only) to: Dear Abby, Anger Booklet, P.O. Box 447, Mount Morris, IL 61054-0447. (Postage is included.)



Pastimes





TRIBUNE SPORTS SCORES

SPORTS TRANSACTIONS

MLB
HOUSTON ASTROS-Fired Jimmy Williams, manager; Burt Hooton, pitching coach; and Harry Spilman, hitting coach. Named Phil Garner manager, Jim Hickey pitching coach, and Gary Gaetti hitting coach.

NBA
ATLANTA HAWKS-Signed C Jason Collier.
BOSTON CELTICS-Re-signed C Mark Blount to a six-year contract.
CHARLOTTE BOBCATS-Signed G Jason Hart and F Tamar Slay.
DALLAS MAVERICKS-Re-signed G Marquis Daniels to a five-year contract with a team option.
DETROIT PISTONS-Signed F Antonio McDyess to a four-year contract with a team option and G-F Carlos Delfino to a three-year contract with a team option.
GOLDEN STATE WARRIORS-Re-signed C Adonal Foyle to a six-year contract.
LOS ANGELES CLIPPERS-Traded F-C Melvin Ely and G Eddie House to Charlotte for 2005 and 2006 second-round draft picks.
LOS ANGELES LAKERS-Traded C Shaquille O'Neal to Miami for F Lamar Odom, F Caron Butler, F-C Brian Grant and a future first-round draft pick.
MEMPHIS GRIZZLIES-Signed F Brian Cardinal to a six-year contract.
MILWAUKEE BUCKS-Signed C Etan Thomas to a six-year offer sheet.
PHILADELPHIA 76ERS-Signed F Brian Skinner to a multiyear contract.
PHOENIX SUNS-Signed G Quentin Richardson to a six-year offer sheet. Signed G Steve Nash to a six-yr contract.
SAN ANTONIO SPURS-Re-signed F Bruce Bowen. Signed G Beno Udrih.
TORONTO RAPTORS-Signed G Rafer Alston to a five-year contract.
UTAH JAZZ-Signed F Carlos Boozer and C Mehmet Okur to six-year offer sheets. Re-signed G Carlos Arroyo to a four-year contract.

NFL
GREEN BAY PACKERS-Voided the trade of DE Jamal Reynolds to Indianapolis after Reynolds failed his physical and waived him.
NEW ENGLAND PATRIOTS-Released S Jason Perry.

PHILADELPHIA EAGLES-Signed G Adrien Clarke to a four-year contract and LB Jeremiah Trotter to a one-year contract.

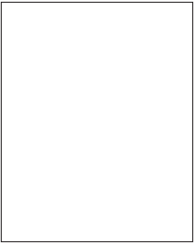
Olympics
U.S. OLYMPIC MEN'S ROAD CYCLING TEAM-Announced Levi Leipheimer will replace Lance Armstrong.

College
AUBURN-Named Casey Dunn assistant baseball coach.
DARTMOUTH-Named Maribel Sanchez Souther women's cross country coach.
EVERGREEN STATE-Named Kim Farnsworth athletic trainer.
HOUSTON-Named John Severance women's tennis coach.
N.J. CITY-Named Bridgette Quimpo softball coach.
NORTH DAKOTA STATE-Named Eric Viney women's assistant volleyball coach.
NORTHWESTERN-Announced men's junior basketball F Bernard Cote will transfer from Kentucky.
OKLAHOMA-Named Bill Pink director of women's basketball operations.
PALM BEACH ATLANTIC-Announced the resignation of Chris Bizol, men's and women's tennis coach, to take a position with Texas-Tyler.
RHODE ISLAND-Announced the resignation of Boe Pearman, women's basketball coach.
SANTA CLARA-Named M. Felipe Montoro assistant cross country coach and Steve Drake women's assistant basketball coach.
SETON HALL-Named Gerson Echeverry men's assistant soccer coach.
SKIDMORE-Named Darren Bennett women's basketball coach.
ST. FRANCIS, PA.-Named Wylie Crisanti women's lacrosse coach.
TULSA-Named Christy Connoyer softball coach.
WRIGHT STATE-Named Rob Cooper baseball coach.

By The Associated Press

LOCAL SCORES

RESTAURANT LEAGUE STANDINGS		
Angel Wings	3	0
Country House	3	1
Jollibee	3	1
Capricciosa	2	1
Keeraku	1	2
LSG Sky Chefs	0	3
El Segundo	0	4



27

Saipan Tribune

Sports

25

